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NINTH ANNUAL TOUR OF

*5F 1922*  
**J.H. L<sup>a</sup> PEARL'S**

**GREAT ALLIED SHOWS**  
**MAMMOTH MUSEUM,**  
**Big 2 RING CIRCUS,**



MENEGAN & CO., CINCINNATI



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Positively the Only Big Show Coming this Season! The above Dates are Absolutely Unalterable.

**JULY-AUGUST 1980**





## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 24, No. 4

JULY-AUGUST 1980

Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

The illustration on the cover of this issue shows the front cover of an eight page newspaper courier of the J.H. LaPearl's Great Allied Shows, Big 2 Ring Circus and Mammoth Museum.

The LaPearl show toured from 1891 through 1899. This courier was used during the final season of 1899. It was designed and printed by the Hannegan Show Print of Cincinnati, Ohio. Pfening collection.

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San Francisco, Ca. 94131

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Ashville, N.Y. 14710

### THOSE WHO HELPED

Early in the year it was announced that two special types of membership in the Circus Historical Society were being created. Those who wished to contribute beyond the regular dues amount were invited to become Sustaining or Contributing members. The officers are pleased to report that a number of CHS members have answered the call. Those in these two special membership classifications are listed below:

**SUSTAINING MEMBERS**—Robert Neilson; Richard J. Reynolds, III; Stuart Thayer; Henry D. Magnin; A. Brian Liddicoat; James Roller; Paul Salasca; Fred D. Pfening, Jr.; and Fred D. Pfening, III.

**CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS**—Robert C. Boelio; Mike C. Piccolo; Charles L. Amos; Jerome Cargill; F. Beverly Kelley; Tom Parkinson; Leo N. Gouper; Robert F. Stapelton; Paul R. Ingrassia; James N. Woodruff; James L. Parker; E.C. Cridlebaugh, Jr.; Frank R. Mitchell; Lucille Lane; Kent Ghirard; James Hainer; Dale Riker; Robert F. Sabia; Albert Hodgini; George W. Burr; James R. Depiro; Eureka D. Arnold; David R. Edwards; Michael D. Sporrer; Douglas Holwadel; Jerry Cash; Robert Scherff; Patrick F. Smith; John J. Lentz; Walter Clicqueno; J. George Disk; Tom Barron; Melvin J. Miller, Jr.; John F. Sherman; Dennis R. Cook; Parnell Brennen and Ed Cripps.

### HALL OF FAME CLOSES

After 24 years as a popular attraction in Sarasota, Fla., the Circus Hall of Fame presented the final performance and the doors were closed on May 27, 1980. John Zweifel, a CHS member from Orlando, Fla. purchased the entire contents of the Hall and plans at a later date to reopen the Circus Hall of Fame as part of a larger complex in the Orlando area.

Six famous wagons from the Hall were placed on "indefinite loan" to the Ringling Museum of the Circus. Moved by Zweifel to the Ringling Museum were the Two



Hemispheres, Sig Sautelle band chariot, an animal cage, an Italian caravan, Tom Thumb's coach and a ticket wagon from the Ringling-Barnum Circus. All other wagons were moved to the Royal American Shows quarters in Tampa. The remainder of the collection was placed in storage.

The real estate of the Circus Hall of Fame was sold to another person.

### CIRCUS HALL OF FAME AWARDS

Six "circus greats" were added to the Circus Hall of Fame on June 16, 1980. The awards were made during the annual convention of the Circus Fans Association in Sarasota, Fla.

The National Awards Committee had met earlier in the day and selected the following. Mack MacDonald, elephant trainer, Dr. J.Y. Henderson, circus veterinarian, The Holland Family, Henrietta (Groefent) Kreis and Mollie Bailey, famous woman circus owner.

John Zweifel met with the committee and announced that he planned to continue the yearly selections, with a meeting planned for 1981 during the CFA convention in Phoenix, Ariz.

### CORRECTION

Two photos that appeared in the March-April issue of the *Bandwagon* were not properly credited. The photo of the Sells-Floto horse car on page 23 and the photo of the Mack truck pulling four wagons on page 26 were both taken by Johnnie Schmidt, and should have been so credited.

### BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966 all but Mar.-Ap., July-Aug., Nov., Dec.

1967 all but May-June

1968 all issues available

1969 all but Mar.-Ap., May-June, Nov.-Dec.

1970 all but Sept.-Oct.

1971 all but May-June

1972 all issues available

1973 all issues available

1974 all issues available

1975 all issues available

1976 all issues available

1977 all issues available

1978 all issues available

1979 all issues available

Price is now \$2.25 each. Add 90c postage.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES  
2515 Dorset Rd.  
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## 1981 CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM CALENDARS

The circus calendar is back by popular demand and ready for 1981. Six, full color, lithograph productions in this beautiful 17" x 24" lendar. Posters include M.L. Clark, RBBB, Barnum & Bailey, and Buffalo Bill. Each calendar comes in a crush proof mailing tube. \$4.00 each postpaid. Order today! Circus World Museum, 426 Water Street, Baraboo, WI 53913. Wisconsin residents please add 4% sales tax.

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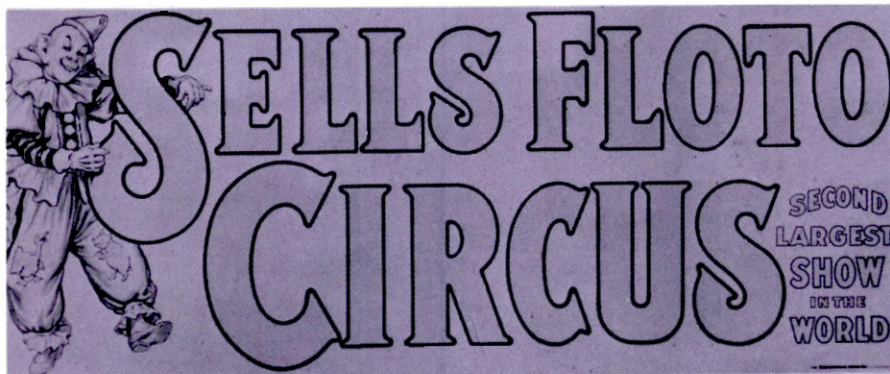
## CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY FINANCIAL REPORT

May 1, 1979 through April 30, 1980

Balance in First National Bank May 1, 1979	601.59
Receipts:	
Dues	12376.61
Subscriptions	1978.00
Back Issue Sales	1067.75
Advertising	1463.51
Total Receipts	16885.87
	17487.46
Disbursements:	
Bandwagon Printing	14894.00
Bandwagon Postage	390.00
Bandwagon Mailing Expense	597.78
Sec'y-Treas. Expense	477.36
Sec'y-Treas. Postage	535.00
Bank Service Charges and Canadian Exchange	114.58
Misc. Expense	326.27
Total Disbursements	17334.99
Balance in First National Bank April 30, 1980	152.47

Audited statement prepared by Gerald F. Combs, July 30, 1980





## SEASON OF 1922

by Gordon M. Carver

*MASHEETA*

"Sells-Floto Circus, Zoo & Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, 5 Rings & Stages, 400 Stars and the Greatest Clown Rider on Earth, with the Famous Hanneford Family", was the way the show was to advertise itself in the newspapers for the season of 1922. But newspaper advertising was not the subject of the meeting held in Chicago in December 1921 by the advertising men from Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, Sells-Floto Circus, Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, John Robinson Circus, Howes Great London Shows, Van Amberg Trained Wild Animal Shows, Rhoda Royal Circus, Sparks World Famous Shows and Al. G. Barnes Big Four Ring Wild Animal Circus. They were concerned with outdoor advertising, and in particular that kind that was posted on the sides of barns, brick walls and other large outdoor surfaces. At the meeting it was agreed that they would not cover such outdoor bills of another show. But the agreement must have been made with tongue in cheek, or they failed to tell their bill car managers for this practice continued. In fact only two years later there was a lawsuit instituted by Sparks Circus against Sells-Floto Circus with the latter then filing a counter suit against the former for "covering paper". But all this is ahead of our story.

Sells-Floto Circus was spending its last winter in the old winter quarters in Denver with the usual hurried activity after the first of the year to get the show ready for the road.

Zack Terrell and William Wells, Equestrian Director, went to New York City to order new Spec costumes. Another item of interest was the arrival on February 4 of two elephants from India, Tillie and baby Virginia. It was also reported that a large African elephant had been contracted for but this animal never arrived. However, the most important news was the announcement of the purchase of nineteen all steel cars from the Keith Railway Equipment Co. This order consisted of fourteen flats and five stocks, all 70 feet long with 80,000 pounds capacity each and of the now well-known "fish belly" type of construction and oak flooring. They were to be delivered in Denver no later than April 1 in time to be loaded and on their way to Chicago for the April 8 opening there. The train consist as the season started was to be two advance cars, 14 flats, 6 stocks, one of which was to come from equipment already on hand, and 8 coaches. This train was to be later augmented by an additional order which apparently could not be delivered by April 1 as needed, of which more later.

At the same time it was announced that the two advance cars would be under the direction of Paul Harrell on #1 and P.N. Branson on #2; later replaced. And these two men would have

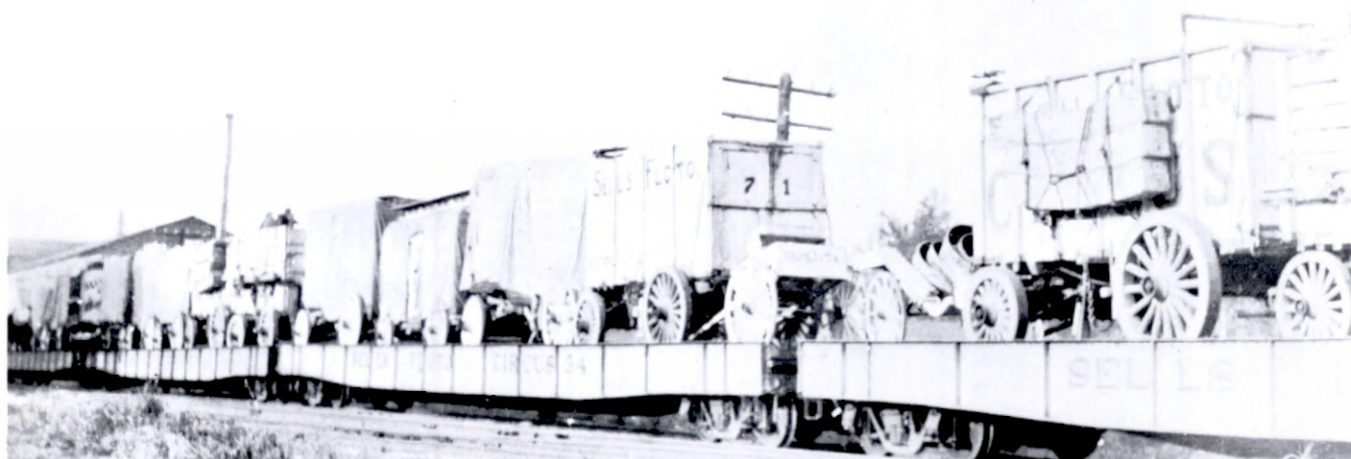
**This group of 4 loaded flats was taken on the Floto show in 1922. Jim McRoberts collection.**

**This 15 sheet bill was used during the 1922 season. It was designed and printed by the Strobridge Co. Harold Dunn collection.**

their hands full with opposition from the Ringling-Barnum show through much of the season. Others on the advance were Edward C. Warner, General Agent, who was largely responsible for the conflict, mostly successful, with the Big Show, Clint W. Finney, Contracting Agent, and W.B. Naylor, General Press Representative.

By mid-March final arrangements were being made for the trip east to Chicago for the opening on April 8 and the outdoor opening in Indianapolis on April 25. In the March 18 *Billboard* appeared the "Call" notice for the show people. The performers were to report to William Wells; the musicians to Don Montgomery, Bandmaster; prop men to Charles Luckey, boss of props; ring stock men to Frank Wingate, Ring Stock Boss; and cookhouse people to Fred Seymour, Steward; at the Coliseum in Chicago, April 4 at 10 a.m. It will be noticed from this that the show provided meals for its people in Chicago as well as on the road. The drivers were to report to Henry Brown, the trainmen to Jack Biggers, dining car people and porters to Charles Conover, seat men and riggers to John Eberle and side show people to Doc Ogden at Indianapolis on April 17. Apparently from this no draft horses were used in Chicago so we must assume that the cages, trunk, prop and wardrobe wagons were moved between the Coliseum and the railroad yards by truck or local draymen. The show now had two trucks and may have hired others to assist. Of course, by now the advance paper had been put up by advance car #1 which had arrived in Chicago March 19 and by the #3 car a week later.

At the rehearsal Thursday night April 6 the elephants got their reputation off to a good start by staging a mini-stampede. Three of the bulls were not actors and so were left in the menagerie. This they disliked, pulled their stakes and made for the arena under a full head of steam. As soon as they arrived in the arena the other seventeen joined in the romp and all twenty spent some time milling about until they got tired. None of the circus personnel tried to stop them feeling that they would soon tire which they did.







**Cage of lions in a Sells-Floto parade around 1922. Joe Bradbury collection.**

Three mini-parades using the 20 elephants which were under the direction of Emery Stiles and James Dooley were made in "the Loop", the first time for a circus parade in Chicago downtown in many years. The parades were given on Friday, Saturday, the opening day, and the following Monday. Besides the elephants there was a tab wagon with part of the band, the show's camels and the wild west contingent.

As usual the Showmen's League had a large "Success—1922—to Sells-Floto" floral piece in the lobby opening night. Many visitors were on hand during the rehearsal period including Courtney Riley Cooper, a guest of George L. Myers producer of the Spec, who commented on the lavishness of the costumes, their richness, variety and quantity, being enough to make Flo Ziegfeld gasp. He also remarked that the "gigantic wagons shine with bright enamel and pure gold leaf and are so valuable they are under the eye of at least one vigilant attache' at all times".

The first week in Chicago was very satisfactory except Wednesday which was off slightly. On opening night Poodles Hanneford played an encore which was to become a frequent occurrence during the season, but new to Chicago annals. During the week two new baby elephants arrived and were named Kansas Otto and Denver Floto. The run ended with overall better business than in 1921, the first week being \$4,000 better. There were no turnaways and the matinees were light as usual, but the evenings very fair. Within two hours after the end of the performance Sunday night, April 23, the show was loaded and on its way to Indianapolis, the under canvas opener.

At Indianapolis a completely new canvas layout from the U.S. Tent & Awning Co. was in the air awaiting the arrival of the show. Also the new grandstand had been erected in the big top. But heavy rain greeted the show Tuesday morning, opening day, and it was necessary to cancel the parade. Then the weather cleared and attendance at the afternoon show was fair and the evening capacity.

Leaving Indianapolis a fast run of long jumps was made into Springfield and Newark, Ohio, Wheeling, West Virginia, with the week ending in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh. The show then moved to Philadelphia for a week's run, May 1-6. The Ringling-Barnum show followed them there the next week so there was plenty of opposition billing on the walls and in the newspapers. Likewise, the following week with two days in Washington and two in Baltimore saw them just one week ahead of the Big One. The week

closed with no opposition in Wilmington and Trenton.

The next and sixth week of May 15 found them in Newark, New Jersey, still just one week ahead of the Big One's two day stand there, May 22-23. The *Newark Evening News*, Newark's leading paper, carried an interesting article about the show and a large spread of line drawings by a staff artist of various aspects of the show. It was more and better publicity than the Ringling-Barnum show got for its stay the following week. The rest of the week, all in New Jersey, was opposition free at Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Camden and Atlantic City. It was a week of exceptional business. All the performances were complete sellouts except in Jersey City and Elizabeth. In Elizabeth the night show had to be cancelled because of water on the lot from heavy rains. In Atlantic City the show had the two largest houses ever in that town.

The following week of May 22 the show again picked up competition from RBBB but managed to be the first show in. At Allentown and Scranton they were only two days ahead. Then at Norwich, New York, they were free but the next day at Utica they again found the Ringling-Barnum "Wait" paper for June 9, two

**This photo of the Two Jesters steam calliope was taken in Detroit, Mich., on May 30, 1925. Although the Two Jesters later became one of the best known and most widely photographed steam calliopes in circus history, for years confusion existed among historians as to the exact date it was built. Well known was the fact that it was built by Charlie Luckie and Leonard Aylesworth for Sells-Floto, but when created the problem. In a 1954 interview the late Charlie Luckie told Joe Bradbury that he and Aylesworth built the**



**Two cages of polar bears in a Sells-Floto parade around 1922. Joe Bradbury collection.**

weeks later. The week ended enroute to Boston with stops at Schenectady and Pittsfield, Massachusetts. This latter town was expecting RBBB on June 10. A rather difficult climb over the Berkshire Hills resulted in a late arrival at 8 a.m. in Pittsfield.

They came in one section of 29 cars—14 flats, 8 stocks and 7 sleepers. This count made by Mr. Marcks is at variance with the earlier one reported in the *Billboard*, which gave the count as 28 cars with 6 stocks and 8 sleepers. This latter count gave the show two advance cars which we have reason to believe was correct. Other items that Mr. Marcks reported were 53 wagons, two trucks, one cart, two autos, one motorcycle and one mule mobile (whatever that might be). The flats as previously mentioned were new Keith all steel as were the stock cars. They were painted white with red lettering and numbers. The coaches were white with red trim. Among the wagons on the flats were a stake driver, two canvas spool wagons and two wagons with engines and

wagon at the Sells-Floto quarters in Denver, Col., the last winter the show was in that city, 1921-1922, and that 1922 was the first season it was on the road. The unexplained absence of photos taken of the wagon during its first season helped create much of the problem of when it originated. This photo taken in 1925 is part of a large pan photo of all of the show personnel, and is the first to turn up. The wagon is currently preserved in the Ringling Museum of the Circus, Sarasota, Fla. Pfening collection.







**This photo of a group of the Sells-Floto elephants was taken in the Chicago Coliseum during the opening stand in 1922. Pfening collection.**

generators for the electric lights used in the big top.

Everything was on the lot by noon. The parade left at 12:30 and was back in an hour. The parade had four lady buglers, twelve open cages, two tableau wagons (a surprisingly small number) that carried the band split into two parts, a clown police patrol wagon, the mule mobile, an air calliope and steam calliope, cowboys, cowgirls, Cossacks and Indians all mounted, four camels drawing a cart, nine groups of men and lady riders and eleven elephants. A truck pulled the hippo den. Not all the animals were in the parade for in the menagerie top there were 13 cages, 4 camels, 2 llamas, 11 elephants, 4 Indian teepees and two candy stands. In the cages were lions, lionesses, monkeys, tigers, a black bear, brown bear, polar bears, parrots and other birds, farm deer, ostriches and the hippo. The cookhouse and draft stock tops were dismantled at 5:30. The big top was down and loaded at 11:30 and the train was on its way to Boston at 1:00 a.m.

The performance of the Sells-Floto circus opened to the crashing music of Don Montgomery's 26-piece band, a giant ensemble of colors and the stately pageantry of the new Spec, "A Night in Cairo". It was agreed that this was the most "brilliantly bespangled and bejeweled" presentation since the show's founding. The story of this Spec had the King of Egypt enter the center ring and mount the throne accompanied by twelve dancing girls. Then the Queen of Nyzania was announced and entered with mounted people, slaves (black canvasmen who were earning a couple of extra dollars), guardsmen, camels, elephants and llamas marching around the hippodrome track, and finally lying down as the cast sang an Egyptian Love Song followed by a solo dance by the Queen. Then an outlaw of the desert entered with a captured dancing girl and after much bartering sold her to the King, whereupon the outlaw left. The dancing girl then danced, mounted the throne and sat by the King to end the Spec. It was colorful if corny by current standards. It was quite a production and drew raves from local newspapermen.

The show that opened in Chicago varied slightly from the road show that had a couple of numbers that did not appear in the Windy City. Since it was the road show that most people saw that is the one we will give here as it appeared in Boston. After the opening Spec just described the performance continued as follows.

2. This had three rings of bucking mules, an

act popular on many shows of that time. It was a comedy act of a rough and tumble sort by lively animals and clowns with a furious pace.

3. Three rings of elephants, three in ring one and four each in rings two and three, were presented by Stella Rowland, Irene Montgomery and Ethel Hamilton.

4. This number was crowded with aerialists over the rings and stages. J. Newton and the Nelson Duo performed balancing and equilibristic demonstrations over the stages while R. Goodwin did the same over the center ring. Surrounding ring one over the track were four trapezes with the Hendryx Sisters, Marguerite Mason, Belle McMahon and Victoria Hamilton while both aerial ladders and a trapeze filled the air over the track around ring three with Schubert, Leo Hamilton, and Miss Cotter. This act was an imitation of the top of the tent filling numbers the Ringling-Barnum show featured during these years. It was a high class substitute for the aerial ladder ballet used on smaller shows in later years.

5. Now came another eye filler. The three rings and two stages were filled. In ring one Leo Hamilton had dogs and ponies. On stage one Millie Ainsworth presented dogs and monkeys. The center ring was filled with more dogs and ponies directed by Victor Bedini. On stage two James Williams showed his monkeys and dogs while in ring three Nellie Rowland had trained dogs.

6. Now about a third of the way through the show came this number in which a variety of exceptional acrobats performed in seemingly impossible feats of twisting and turning and other difficult exercises. In ring three Leon and Mitzi appeared in hand to hand balancing. Belle McMahon on stage one did a series of graceful contortions and back bends. In the center ring the Great Schubert engaged in a sensational demonstration of Chinese juggling. On stage two Manello did a matchless act of balancing. And finally in ring three the Roeder Family gave a brilliant exhibition of hand balancing and strength.

7. This was an outstanding equestrian performance in the three rings by the Hobsons, Miss Daisy Hodgini and a jockey act by George and Fred Derrick.

8. This was an unusual interlude in a circus performance. Miss King rendered a charming bird song accompanied by the band.

9. In the center ring the clown band made musical discord hilariously funny.

10. This was called the Act Beautiful. In it appeared five groups of snow white horses and snow white living models in picturesque poses of living marble statuary. This was a very popular number in these years.

11. This was another aerial display over the three rings and two stages by Eddie Ward, Miss McMahon, Beatrice Sweeney, Miss Hamilton and Roscoe Goodwin. These were all standard single trapeze displays except that of Roscoe Goodwin who performed much of his act while balancing on his head.

12. Again the clowns which were a feature of this year's show made their appearance in a walkaround. There were about 18 clowns on the roster, nowhere near the 35-40 that the Ringling-Barnum show had, but still enough to make a satisfactory comic relief. They were headed by Arthur Borella as producing clown who would be a headliner in his field for many years. Paul Jerome, Herman Joseph and Earl Shipley were others on the roster who would gain wide renown in the world of Jesters.

13. In this number all five performing areas were filled with tight wire performers, Fred Biggs and Belle McMahon, Leon and Mitzi, The Great Schubert, Balancing Manello and the Luckey Sisters.

14. Now came the outstanding feature of the show, the great Edwin "Poodles" Hanneford, comic rider of all time, and his brother George, who was his straight man, together with the rest of the family, sisters, Mother and Father. It was a tremendous act and regularly drew so much applause that "Poodles" had to reappear for bows.

15. Here were presented a melange of varied

**Edward "Poodles" Hanneford is pictured standing in front of a bill stand featuring him in Chicago, Ill. in the spring of 1922. Burt Wilson collection.**





gymnastic, acrobatic and equilibristic numbers by the Hai Young Chinese Troupe. Five Monroe Japs in Jiu Jitsu, Eight Bedouin Arabs in whirlwind tumbling, the Four Roeders and eight more of the Hai Young Troupe.

16. Again they had a center ring solo spot, this time for the great female impersonator, Berta Beeson, on the tight wire. Herbert Beeson, when dressed in female clothing, did tricks that few women were then capable of doing and so made "her" act most unusual.

17. Now the track was taken over briefly by the cowboys, cowgirls and Indians galloping around the track with much yelling and waving of hats and lassoes to advertise the wild west aftershow or concert and to stimulate the sale of tickets by the ushers who were about to start passing through the seats.

18. This number was another standard of the times, the flying, swaying, turning butterflies suspended from the roof of the top by their teeth—the Hamilton Sisters, Miss Rowland, Luckey Sisters, Minnie Fisher and the Sweeney Sisters.

19. In the three rings various riders on the show dressed as Mohawk, Sioux and Comanche Indians gave an exhibition of difficult feats of riding in the saddle in the three rings.

20. All the clowns appeared in their final walkaround to give the prop men time to erect the safety nets for the flying return acts that were to follow.

21. Two big flying return acts over the two stages were presented by the Five Wards and Five Nelsons. This was a thrilling number to the audience and was a very popular number on all shows big enough to have them.

22. The show closed with five races on the hippodrome track—a four horse-jockey race,

**Herbert "Slats" "Berta" Beeson, was featured in the center ring on the low wire during the 1922 season of the Floto show. Pfening collection.**



**Paul W. Harrell, manager of the No. 1 advance advertising car is shown with his crew. The photo was taken in Prescott, Ariz. in 1922. Pfening collection.**

two ostriches ridden by men, four cowgirls racing pinto ponies, three ponies with monkey riders, three two-horse teams in Roman standing racing with two men and one girl, and finally the greatest thrill of all, two four-horse chariots thundering around the track three times.

As can be seen it was a show that was almost entirely oriented to human performers. Except for the elephants there were no trained animals as such. There were no trained seals, liberty horses, bears or other animals that were so regularly associated with circuses. Nor were there any wild animal acts. Of course there was a good deal of horse flesh in the various equestrian acts, posing number, races and wild west. It was a most unusual show. But it did seem to be popular with the audiences.

The week in Boston starting May 29 put it in two weeks ahead of the Big One which was not due in until the week of June 12. In general business was good but the most significant happening was the arrival of ten additional cars to make it a 40 car show. However, the flats and stocks were the old style 60 foot cars. These were to remain on the show for some weeks when they were replaced by 70 foot Keith cars. The date of this replacement cannot now be determined but it would seem to be an established fact since it was reported in year's Route Book. It is believed that this equipment was awaiting the show when it arrived in Boston. The cars added were 4 flats, 3 stocks and three coaches giving the show a consist of 2 advance cars, 18 flats, 9 stocks and 11 coaches.

To fill this equipment were another 6 cages, 2 tab wagons, 2 stringer wagons, another stable wagon, a rigging wagon and possibly one or two others. We do not understand why 2 stringer wagons were added unless the big top up to that point had not been completely filled with seats. We do know that reserved chairs were used for the first time in 1922.

58 draft horses were added also so that the 6 cages and 2 tab wagons could be added to the parade. It was also reported that some elephants arrived with the stock cars, although this was apparently in error. But we know for sure that eight baby elephants arrived on the show at Salem, June 6, to give the show a total

herd of 19. It was a sizeable herd and the largest of any show then touring except the Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey combine which had 34 in 1922.

After closing the week in Boston the show moved to Lynn, Salem as before mentioned, Haverhill, Lawrence and Manchester, where RBBB was to follow in two weeks on June 24, and closed the week in Lowell. The next week starting June 12, Portland saw Sells-Floto two weeks before RBBB arrived. Portsmouth and Nashua were free of opposition but then at Worcester they were only seven days ahead. After Fitchburg they played Springfield where they were only two days ahead. This was the last they were to see of RBBB paper until early August on the West Coast.

While the show was in Portland Zack Terrell launched a Dept. of Courtesy and all employees attended a lecture on the courteous way to treat customers. The idea received much praise in the Portland newspapers. However, by the end of the week the *Billboard* visited the show in Springfield and criticized it because a few of the help were seen accosting girls. Also the handling of the overflow crowd was criticized. They also remarked that the band during the performance was sloppy in appearance, some with their coats off while only a few wore their hats.

Now the show started a rapid move westward. The week of June 19 found them in Albany, Gloversville, Rome, Oswego, Auburn and Lockport; all New York state. Next came Erie and then in Ohio they were at Akron, Mount Vernon, Columbus and Dayton followed by Muncie, Indiana. At Columbus another baby elephant arrived. As a publicity stunt it was booked into one of the city's hotels with a double room. The animal was four months old and 2½ feet high, ate only rice, crushed oats and milk. It became the 20th bull on the show. It rode in a cage in the parade and was displayed on a platform in the menagerie. We do not know its name. It made its first parade two days later in Muncie.

The week of July 3 started in Terre Haute where they had two capacity houses. The Terre Haute Press, usually unfriendly to circuses, gave the show one full column of praise stating that every act was true circus with no semblance of wild animal or wild west acts. Apparently the reporter did not stay for the concert to witness the Buffalo Bill Wild West. How he missed this in the advertising, though,





This midway scene shows an opening of the Floto side show during the 1922 season. The double banner in the center shows the fighting lion act presented by a young Terrell Jacobs. Circus World Museum collection.

we do not know. The rest of the week was spent in Decatur, Springfield, and Alton, Illinois, before crossing the Mississippi for a three day stay in Saint Louis, July 7-9, the first Sunday performance since Chicago.

On Monday, July 10, a brief return to Illinois at Quincy was made before the westward route was resumed at Centerville, Iowa. Here there was a terrific blow and rain at the conclusion of the night performance. The big top stayed up but only by a miracle. The draft horses from the first section which was loaded and about to leave for the next town were unloaded and taken back to the lot to help in getting the wagons off the lot. Next came Creston followed by Omaha, Saint Joseph and a Saturday-Sunday stand in Kansas City, Missouri. In Omaha it was said that it was the best show seen in that city in some years. There were 20 cages in the parade and the tiny elephant on the platform in the menagerie was an object of much interest. At Saint Joseph a gas tank in the cookhouse exploded and painfully (but not seriously) burned one man. The tent was destroyed in the ensuing fire but replaced by Baker-Lockwood two days later. All the hospital expenses for the man were paid by the show and the employees took up a collection to buy incidentals for him during his stay there.

The next week found the show in Kansas at Topeka, Emporia, Hutchinson and Dodge City followed by the Colorado towns of La Junta and Pueblo. The following Sunday was spent visiting friends and getting ready for the two days of performances in Denver. Mr. Tammen and Mr. Bonfils and families and friends spent a good part of the three days visiting and entertaining the show folks. The rest of the week was spent in Colorado Springs, Greeley followed by the Wyoming towns of Cheyenne, Casper and on Sunday Thermopolis for a matinee only.

The week of July 31 with the season now into its second half opened in Montana at Billings, Livingston, Butte and Missoula, followed by Sand Point, Idaho, and Spokane. The next week started with two days in Seattle where the

show again began to have opposition from RBBB which was due in August 22-23. Then came Tacoma with the Big One following on August 25-26. This was almost a solid week of opposition after weeks of none. The week ended at The Dalles.

The midway was a busy place for not only was there the main side show, but two other small side shows as well. The big side show had three ticket boxes outside and a 190 foot

This newspaper ad was used for the July 4, 1922 date of the Floto show in Decatur, Ill. Author's collection.

Decatur  
Holiday  
Attraction **JULY 4**  
1922

THREE SHOWS:  
11 A. M., 2:30 AND  
8:00 P. M.— Street  
Parade at 9:30.

**SELLS-  
FLOTO  
CIRCUS**

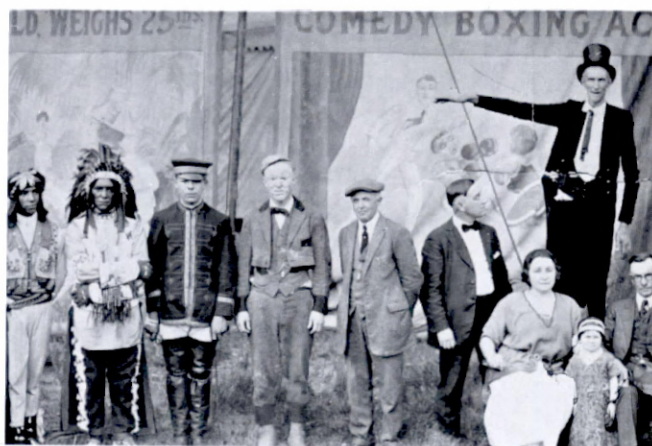
**&  
BUFFALO BILLS  
WILD WEST SHOW**

**5 RINGS  
STAGES** **400  
STARS**

**AND THE GREATEST  
CLOWN RIDER ON EARTH  
POODLES' HANNEFORD**  
WITH THE FAMOUS HANNEFORD FAMILY

Seats On Sale Show Day 9 A. M.  
WEST'S DRUG STORE

Record's Pasture— Corner Garfield  
and Lowber Sts. Admission —  
Adults, 75c; Children, 50c—  
War Tax Included.



Third from left is Terrell Jacobs with a group of side show performers on the Sells-Floto Circus in 1922. Don Smith collection.

bannerline. Inside there was the side show band and minstrel troupe of twelve people including the leader, George Israel. The attractions were highlighted by none other than Captain Terrell Jacobs, then a young man just getting started, with a fighting lion act. In addition to Jacobs there were twelve other platform acts—Juggler, Long haired Lady, Bag Puncher, Snake Charmer, Midget, Tattooed Man, Midget Musical Act, Fortune Teller, Giant, Fire Eater, Sword Walker and the Assistant Manager of the show who did both a magic act and a Punch and Judy show. John Ogden was the Manager and did the outside bally.

The other two shows on the midway were the so-called pit show type. They were "Zaza" and the "Honduran Twins". "Zaza" was a wild man geek show in which the "performer" killed small animals such as toads and snakes by biting off their heads. It was a repulsive type of show but in those apparently less sophisticated times it drew an audience. The other show, "Honduran Twins" was an entirely different type of show. In this one a set of siamese twins, still babies, were shown under the care of a nurse, a much more humane show but one that today would be frowned upon.

Sells-Floto now turned a bit eastward for the week starting August 14 moving through Idaho and Utah stopping at Boise, Shoshone, Pocatello, Logan, Salt Lake City and Ogden. Then came a quick return to the west coast through Reno into Sacramento and Oakland. In these latter two cities they were again opposed by the Ringling-Barnum show, but managed to be eight days ahead of it. This was the start of almost constant opposition for the next three weeks. On Thursday, August 21, they arrived in San Francisco for four days. RBBB was to be there for only three days September 1-3. The Big Show rented a lot next to the Sells-Floto show grounds at 12th and Market Streets, shutting off access to the "White Show" grounds from Market Street. Sells-Floto had an elephant knock the fence down, but the RBBB crew who were staying there in a small tent immediately rebuilt it. To prevent further trouble the San Francisco Police intervened at this point. The Sells-Floto



STAMPEDIE

management stated that the partial loss of access to the lot hurt their attendance somewhat but could not be sure how much. The ingenuity of the RBBB staff has, at this late date, to be admired, whether we approve of such shenanigans or not.

Leaving San Francisco Sells-Floto moved to San Jose, Stockton, Fresno, Hanford, Bakersfield and ended the week with a matinee only at Taft to prepare for a long run to Los Angeles on Sunday. At all of these towns except Hanford and Taft The Ringling-Barnum show was following them by only seven or eight days. But at Hanford they had another kind of problem, but not an unusual one for Sells-Floto. "Two huge bulls" started a fight, got the other elephants agitated with the result that shortly the whole herd took off on a stampede. An iron fence around the Southern Pacific R.R. station was demolished and then they moved into a lumber yard where they enjoyed themselves tossing timbers about. After they tired of that sport they moved into a garage where they were finally cornered, subdued and moved back to the show. What all this rampaging cost the show was not reported in the show news.

Monday, September 4, they started a week's stay in Los Angeles. Here the Pageant of Progress, a local fair was in progress and it was felt that it had a negative effect on the attendance. Beyond this and the fact that the movie people were much in evidence around the show nothing of note occurred. Again they were opposed by RBBB who followed them in for four days the next week, but there were no problems. The next Sunday was a matinee only date at San Pedro after which they stopped at San Diego, where they were four days ahead of the Big One, Anaheim, Long Beach, Pasadena, San Bernardino, and El Centro where the temperature on Main Street was 124°

They now started back East with a matinee only stand at Yuma, Arizona, where again the temperature was in the upper ranges and bothering the show, to be followed by

**This interesting photo shows a six horse hitch pulling a baggage wagon during the set up of the Floto show in 1922. Circus World Museum collection.**



**This one sheet printed by Strobridge was one of a number of designs featuring Poodles Hanneford in 1922. Carver collection.**

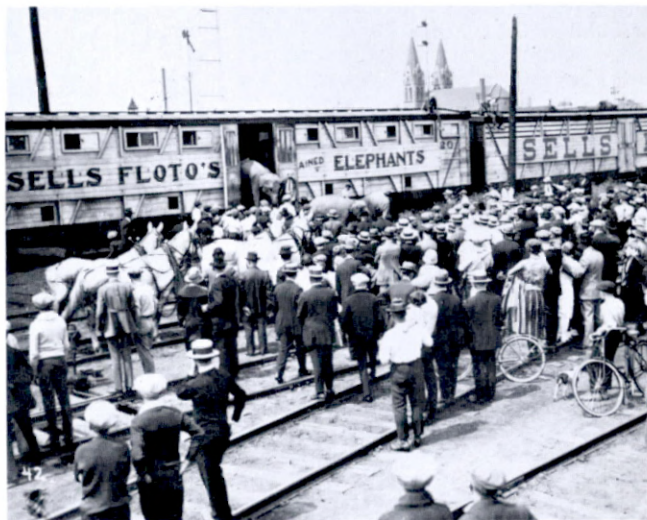
Phoenix. Here the Ringling-Barnum show finally caught up with Sells-Floto. On September 18 the two shows played Phoenix. Only Sells-Floto had a city permit with the result that the Ringling show had to play outside the city limits. But in spite of the poorer location the Big Show apparently did the better business. RBBB reported a gross of \$15,200 and Sells-Floto \$11,600, but local observers felt that both of these figures were exaggerated. However, in spite of this Sells-Floto had a better take than in 1921 when they had no competition. It is interesting that even with the competition between the shows there was still much visiting between the showfolks on both shows. Sells-Floto finished the week in Prescott, an afternoon only in Winslow, Albuquerque, Las Vegas, New Mexico, and

Trinidad, Colorado. In Albuquerque they were only two days ahead of the Ringling-Barnum show.

With only six weeks of the season left the show moved into Kansas and Oklahoma at Great Bend, Wichita, Winifred, Bartlesville, Tulsa and Independence. In the preceding two weeks long jumps of 150 to 275 miles had not been unusual, but the new steel cars could take speeds up to 50 miles an hour and the show made good time with the second section never getting in later than noon. All parades and shows had been given. The 26th week started in Little Rock with Ringling-Barnum being in the next day, followed by an afternoon only in Forest City, then Jackson, Tennessee, Nashville, Huntsville and Chattanooga.

As we get near the end of the season a review of some of the salaries paid to the working crew may be of interest. These were more or less in line with those paid on all shows. When we look at these salaries, how small they were compared to today, we must realize that the prices of things were much lower than now. As an example a loaf of bread could be bought for 8 to 10c and a pack of cigarettes for 12c compared to today's 70c and 65c respectively. Also board and room, as well as transportation, was furnished and there were no payroll taxes. In the baggage stock department a 4-horse driver got \$5.75 a week, a 6-horse driver \$8.05 and an 8-horse driver \$11.45. In the canvas department seat men were relatively well paid getting \$10.00 while canvasmen got only \$3.45 and wagon loaders \$4.60. The cookhouse had the highest paid personnel as might be expected with the chef getting \$25.00, the butcher and baker \$15.00 and 2d cooks \$12.00. Waiters on the staff side got \$4.00 and on the working men side \$3.45, with their helpers the lowest paid on the show at \$2.50. However, it must be remembered that all got weekly tips from the persons they served—about a dollar per person on the staff side and about 50c on the working men side so that with ten to twelve people per waiter their pay was much better than it might otherwise seem. It

**Elephants being unloaded from a bull car with a horse stock car on the right in 1922. Circus World Museum collection.**







The pull over team is shown at the runs in 1922. Note the snubbing post just below the front wheel of the wagon. Circus World Museum collection.



The white ticket wagon is about to hit the runs of a Sells-Floto unloading in 1922. Circus World Museum collection.

might be added that anyone who did not tip might find themselves having a hard time getting a decent meal.

Some other weekly salaries were, in the menagerie, cage men \$4.60 and the elephant handlers \$10.00. With the wild herd of elephants that Sells-Floto had that \$10.00 didn't seem to be an over-payment, or another way of looking at it, for that much pay they didn't seem to do a very good job of controlling their charges. In the ring stock department for animals that had to be kept in good shape for their appearance in the show pay also seemed a bit on the low side. Grooms received only \$4.60, helpers \$3.45 while pony drivers were the best paid at \$5.75. In the prop department the first assistant got \$15.00 and the second man \$12.00 while rigging men who were responsible for the safety of the aerial performers got only \$5.75 and the ground prop men \$3.45. Finally on the train crew, the most dangerous job on the show, run poler, got the most, \$11.45, while the deck polers and front end chalkers were next highest paid at \$9.45 along with the watchman and the knocker.

The week starting October 9 was spent entirely in Alabama at Gadsden, Birmingham where Ringling-Barnum was due in ten days later, Bessemer, Tuscaloosa to be followed by the Big Show in one week, Montgomery and Selma. Then for the 28th week they started in Mobile but moved into Mississippi at Meridan where RBBB came in the next day, Laurel, Brookhaven, Natchez and Vicksburg. The advance cars and brigades that had posted the bills that whetted the appetites of the people in the cities and towns that Sells-Floto Circus had visited was a sizeable crew of 66 men. There were two cars and two brigades. Car number 1 under Paul W. Harrell had 33 men aboard. This included a Boss Billposter with 12 men, Boss Lithographer with 4 men and a Boss Bannerman with 3 men. Also on the car was a Secretary, Steward, Chef, waiter and paste maker. On Car number 3 (there was no number 2) the Boss Billposter had 9 men, the Boss Lithographer 4 men. This car was managed by William Polkinghorn, who had replaced P.N. Branson, with a Secretary, Steward, Chef, Porter, Paste maker, Programmer and Route Rider for a total of 23 men. Brigade number 1 was managed by Arthur Diggs with 5 men and Brigade number 2 was headed by Carl Porter

with 3 men. In the course of a day's work those men put out a lot of advertising. What a contrast it is to the outdoor advertising used by today's shows. But by now these men were either finished or almost finished with their season's job.

In the next to last week they were in Memphis which had been booked at the last moment when the Ringling-Barnum show had cancelled that city. In Clarksdale, Greenwood, Jackson they had people sitting on the track to the ring curbs in the afternoons and near capacity in the evenings. McComb came next followed by two days October 28-29 in New Orleans. New Orleans was the first stand of the season in which they followed the Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus into a town. Here they followed them by about two weeks as RBBB had been there October 15-16. In spite of this Saturday gave good business with Sunday afternoon jammed and the evening a three-quarters house. They wound up October in Louisiana in Houma for an afternoon only and New Iberia. The season closed with the Texas towns, starting November 1, of

"Berta Beeson" was featured in this one sheet poster in 1922. It was printed by the Strobidge Co. Harold Dunn collection.



Orange, Port Arthur, Galveston and Brenham, and after a Sunday off, Temple and Fort Worth. RBBB had been in Fort Worth over a month earlier on September 27, but this was no effective competition. The last stand of the season came November 8 at Ardmore, Oklahoma. Then came the home run to Peru where their winterquarters would thereafter be located.

It had been a successful season in spite of or perhaps because of the close competition with Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus. During the season, exclusive of Chicago, they had played in 33 cities in close proximity to the Big One, although in only one city was it on the same day. But in several they were only a day or two apart. And except in San Francisco there had been no "tricks" played by either show.

## MILTON BARTOK DEAD

Milton "Doc" Bartok, the last of America's medicine show operators, and a well known circus owner died on August 9, 1980.

For many years Bartok owned the Bardex Medicine Co. with a factory in Columbus, Ohio. The patent medicine was sold throughout the country as well as directly from his traveling traditional medicine show under canvas.

During the last 25 years Doc Bartok operated a circus under various titles including United Nations Circus, Hoxie & Bardex Bros. and lastly as the Famous Bartok Circus. The last title was used for a number of years and toured as late as 1971.

## ADDRESS CHANGES

The post office will not forward your copy of the BANDWAGON if you have moved. The post office will discard the magazine and return the address from the envelope, and the new address, with a postage due charge of .25. A second copy will not be sent free of charge.

Please advise the editor of your address change in advance in order not to miss an issue.



# POSTER PRINCESS— VICTORIA CONDONA

By Greg Parkinson

*Introduction: Many years before I was enabled to pursue circus history on a full-time basis by joining the staff of the Circus World Museum, I became intrigued by a particular 1919 Sells-Floto Circus poster. On my visits to the Museum's Research Center in Baraboo, only a slight twisting of my father's arm was required in order to view this lithograph which we called "Princess Victoria". Later I learned that Victoria had actually existed at one time. Unlike so many other "stock" poster art subjects which were merely the work of an artist's imagination, the "Princess" had been a real person who had been a fantastic wire dancer just as depicted by this circus litho.*

*Her name was Victoria Codona. There are probably very few circus enthusiasts who have not heard about her brother, Alfredo Codona. Although he was one of the most eminent circus flyers since Jules Leotard premiered the act in 1859, Victoria's story seems to be a mystery which has eluded recent generations of historians and circus lovers.*

*A very few references to Victoria's circus career contained in the Circus World Museum's index verified that she had been a slack-wire performer in the teens, but no photographs were on file. I began to collect every bit of information that I could find about her. It was a slow process, but one clue led to another, and the hidden story began to unveil.*

*Often I found myself contemplating the reality of Victoria Codona. What had her circus life actually been like? Was she genuinely as beautiful as the poster suggested? How much of a star had she been? What ever happened to her?*

*One afternoon I was examining a stack of unfiled photos when, bang! As if fate had choreographed a special meeting, there she was looking out from the emulsion of an aging black and white photograph. A sixth sense told me that this was Victoria Codona; not just her dream-like appearance, but the vintage of the interior of the tent. Also, standing under the tight-wire, as if protecting her from a fall, were her father and Alfredo.*

*The positive identification of this picture led to others. Circus program references led to trade journal reviews. But it was a letter that I received in November, 1978 that gave me the ultimate key. Buried on the fourth page of facts that Dean Jensen was sharing with me, he casually wrote, "I heard from her as recently as January 20 of this year ... she lives in Palm Springs, California." Perhaps Victoria could help to tell her own story.*

"You see I never had a home. I was raised in a trunk," explains Victoria to those who sit down to listen to her remarkable adventures as a young circus performer. She was born, like her brothers and sisters, "on the road" while her parents, Hortense and Eduardo Codona, trouped across Mexico with their small family

circus. Victoria's birthplace was Alvarado, Vera Cruz. The date was March 6, 1891.

Although a citizen of Mexico by birth, Victoria's heritage is predominately French. Both of her mother's parents came to the United States about 1865 as members of the Buisley circus family, who had thrilled audiences in their native France with their "flying" leaps. Victoria's paternal grandfather was Edward Codona. He left his job at a Scottish shipyard and immigrated to America where he married a French girl, Victorine Rene. Victoria believes that she was named after this grandparent, although her name was anglicized in favor of the British Queen.

As a very young girl, Victoria remembers her parents providing the featured entertainment in the "Gran Circo Codona". Eduardo balanced on a 30 inch sphere which, with his feet, he worked up around a narrow "spiral mountain" path until reaching the upper altitudes of the circus tent (this type of act had been done earlier by the Buisleys).<sup>1</sup> Hortense walked a tight-rope. Together, the Codonas presented their own flying act billed as "Los Cometas".

The three oldest Codona children debuted in the show in 1897. Victoria, Alfredo, and Lalo were flipped and spun from their father's feet in a Mexican style acrobatic act. Alfredo soon took to the single trapeze practicing heel and toe catches. In a like manner, Victoria joined her mother aloft in a double trapeze act. Nevertheless, Victoria's most perfected skill was taught to her by her father. She was a natural on the silver strand.

In February, 1904, not yet 13 years of age, Victoria performed her wire act with the Metropolitan Circus in Mexico. One newspaperman was so impressed that he wrote that nobody had done on a tight-wire what Senorita Victoria accomplished on a slack-wire. She continued to amaze small Mexican audiences. Early in 1909, a Ringling agent saw Victoria's act in Ciudad Juarez and was so taken that he immediately contacted his boss at the Baraboo, Wisconsin winter quarters. On February 13, Eduardo received a telegram from Otto Ringling offering Victoria \$125.00 per week and Barnum & Bailey's center ring for the 1909 American tour.<sup>2</sup> It was this enthusiastic offer which provided Victoria and her brothers with a ticket to America and the "big time".

Less than two months later, Barnum & Bailey's "Greatest Show on Earth" opened in Chicago for the first time in its history. There, Victoria was a stupendous hit. A review of the opening night performance tells the story.

"La Belle Victoria had the place of honor in the center ring, and richly deserved it, this little

**La Belle Victoria's first year in America was 1909, also her first season with Barnum & Bailey. Brother Alfredo Codona is on the right below her. Circus World Museum collection.**



The "Princess Victoria" lithograph was used by the Sells-Floto Circus in 1919. It was printed by the Strobridge Litho. Co. Circus World Museum collection.

woman from Mexico proving a marvel on the slack wire, swinging, revolving, dancing, gliding ... During the act the wire slipped and she was thrown to the ground, hurting her ankle, but she pluckily resumed the act as soon as the wire was tightened securely, and finished







## VICTORIA CODONA

"THE VENUS OF THE HIGH WIRE"

The Most Beautiful, Most Skillful and Most Daring  
Wire Walker in the World

This illustration featuring Victoria Codona appeared in the newspaper courier of the Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1911. Pfening collection.

by swinging to and fro in a tremendous arc, as the wire was slowly lowered to the ground, never once losing her balance, and the entire act performed without a thing in her hands to balance herself with."<sup>3</sup>

Alfredo and Eduardo were the only Codonas to join Victoria during her first season in America; the rest of the family established a home in El Paso, Texas.

The fame of Victoria's loveliness and mystifying balance spread quickly. In the Spring of 1910, Barnum & Bailey returned to New York's Madison Square Garden where each new season was customarily inaugurated. This was Victoria's first visit to the financial

This studio photo of Victoria was taken in 1911. It is autographed to her friend Victoria Davenport. Pfening collection.



and cultural metropolis, and apparently she had "arrived".

"The prettiest girl of the circus" was among the epithets bestowed upon Victoria, and all witnesses were intoxicated with the commanding beauty she possessed. When making her entrance into the ring, her coiffured auburn hair betrayed her pulchritude as "the beautiful girl from Mexico." However, it is doubtful that anyone was ever disappointed by this fact. Her enchanting lithe form coupled with the demureness generated by her bluish eyes<sup>4</sup>, might well have caused several young men's hearts to pound.

Victoria performed her crowd-pleasing magic in lavish self-made knee length dresses. At various moments she balanced on a short ladder supported only by the tiny cable, she danced to Spanish music, and with great speed she traversed from one side of the 35-foot long wire to the other. She jumped and skipped over objects laid upon the wire. The crowds rewarded her with thunderous applause when, with her feet, she see-sawed a narrow wooden board straddled across the wire. But it was Victoria's gradually lengthening swing, presented after the end ring performers had taken their final bows, that impressed the spectators the most. Standing motionless near the middle of the wire, her slender body was laterally cast higher and higher, as the wire was slackened, until the violent rhythmic motion brought her to a horizontal level.

Both Alfredo and Victoria participated in the daily circus street parade. Alfredo rode on a camel. Victoria was transported in an elaborate howdah mounted on the back of one of the Barnum & Bailey's elephants. Despite the fact that Alfredo came to America as an extra in the deal for Victoria, he too began to make his mark with his solo trapeze act. He performed with Barnum & Bailey each of the same four years (1909-1912) that his sister was with the show.

During the off-season while the circus quartered in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Victoria took advantage of her popularity to command engagements like the one in March, 1911 at B.F. Keith's vaudeville theatre in Philadelphia, where she was employed at the rate of \$300.00 per week.<sup>5</sup> There were also winter dates at theatres and circuses in Europe, in luding a performance for Kaiser William II in Berlin.

On January 8, 1912, Victoria and Alfredo opened with the Rhoda Royal Circus in the Convention Hall in Kansas City, Missouri. Blizzard-like conditions hindered business and made moving the show's equipment to St. Louis just short of impossible. The circus struggled on to Wichita where extremely cold weather kept people away, and the show was forced to fold early without completing the scheduled route.<sup>6</sup> However, Rhoda Royal would not give in. He reopened his circus at the Denver Auditorium on March 9. There, snow and icy conditions had to again be combated. But business boomed. A total of 26,364 customers<sup>7</sup> paid to see the performance which featured "Victoria Codona and her brother". This wintry tour demonstrates that not all trouping was easy in those pre-World War I days, not even for La Belle Victoria who turned 21 years of age three days before opening in Denver.

As soon as the Rhoda Royal engagement ended, the Codonas made their way to New York for Barnum & Bailey's 1912 opening. Again Victoria received boisterous ovations. One reviewer wrote, "La Belle Victoria was perfectly at home on the tight-wire, affecting at times a swagger and nonchalance perfectly wonderful to behold."<sup>8</sup>

As the weather warmed in April, Barnum & Bailey left the comparative comforts of Madison Square Garden and set out with their tented pavilions playing Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Boston. On June 24 in Springfield, Massachusetts, Victoria fell during her act. Although sustaining painful injuries,<sup>9</sup> no bones were broken and she continued to work without missing a performance. Quite a different end was met two weeks later, by a fellow performer, Prince Youturkey. A greatly admired Japanese wire artist, Youturkey plunged to his death from the high-wire.<sup>10</sup> Victoria was more fortunate, and despite the constant danger to limb, she never broke a bone during her performing days.<sup>11</sup>

The Barnum & Bailey Circus train moved through the Midwest and journeyed on to the Pacific Northwest playing a seemingly endless series of one day stands. Victoria demonstrated her skills to audiences in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles before the show turned back east toward Texas. In their hometown of El Paso, the Codonas were given a warm reception.<sup>12</sup> After a date in New Orleans, the show followed the Gulf Coast still farther east into Florida, before closing in Mississippi. Thus in the single season of 1912, Victoria Codona performed in nearly every corner of the United States.

In December, 1912, B.F. Keith again landed Victoria for a week, this time at his Colonial Theater in New York. Other vaudeville dates ensued in the central states. Then as though needing new areas of the world to conquer, Victoria, Alfredo, and Eduardo assembled in San Francisco with two other circus families and embarked on February 11, 1913 for

Brother Alfredo Codona is shown awaiting the start of a Barnum & Bailey Circus street parade in 1909. Circus World Museum collection.





Australia. Arriving in Sydney on March 3, the Codonas joined the Wirth Bros. Circus in time to prepare for the gala opening on March 15. New posters were printed exclaiming, "Direct from America: Entire New Company including La Belle Victoria."<sup>13</sup>

Discovering Victoria's charm and daring for the first time, Australians were overwhelmed by her superlative ability on the slack-wire. As reported in the *Billboard*: "When the show recently returned from its highly successful tour of New Zealand, it was augmented by twenty-six artists from America, and the combined shows figured in a program that simply took Sydney by storm. There is a wire-walking act, the like of which has never been seen in the Southern hemisphere, the performer, La Belle Victoria, being the acknowledged champion of the world in that line."<sup>14</sup>

Victoria recalls that the two years she spent with the Wirth Circus were among the most enjoyable during her circus career.

While "down under" in 1914, the Codonas heard rumors that the Mexican revolutionist, Pancho Villa, was terrorizing and killing people in Texas. Concerned for the safety of the rest of their family, the Codonas set sail for America. But after they returned to El Paso, Victoria determined that the stories had been exaggerated. "Pancho Villa was a nice fellow, I dare say a great man." Allegedly, on one occasion, Villa signed papers allowing Victoria to work as a performing artist at the New York Hippodrome.<sup>15</sup>

While performing at a fair with her wire act in 1914, Victoria met William K. Adolph, a race car driver who worked for Barney Oldfield. They fell in love and were married in El Paso on November 16, 1914.

The next year, Victoria played large agricultural fairs in Canada and northern America while Alfredo returned to the Wirth Circus. In 1916 and 1917, Lalo and Alfredo flew with the large Siegrist-Silbon troupe on Barnum & Bailey, which presented a spectacular aerial cross flying return act.<sup>16</sup> A highlight of this period for Victoria was the birth of her first son in February, 1916.

During the winter of 1918-1919, the Flying Codonas were featured with Santos and Artigas in Havana, Cuba. There Alfredo received a telegram sent by one of the Ringling Brothers<sup>17</sup> from Sarasota, Florida, offering Victoria a contract for the Madison Square Garden engagement of the new super circus, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows. The proposal went on to explain that the offer could be extended into the tented season. But Victoria declined Mr. Ringling's invitation, having just made arrangements with the Sells-Floto Circus regarding the 1919 season. Bird Millman was the next wire artist to be offered the Ringling-Barnum center ring spotlight, and she accepted.

Early in 1919, the general agent for the Sells-Floto Circus, Fred Morgan, visited the litho companies in Cincinnati to arrange for the new season's special paper.<sup>18</sup> Included was a call at the Strobbridge Company where it can be speculated that plans were made for the artwork and printing of the "Princess Victoria" lithograph. If these lithographs were delivered in time to post for the first stand of the season, they undoubtedly aided in drawing the two

turnaway crowds on opening day at Wichita Falls, Texas. Sells-Floto had its biggest program to date, and the two Codona acts were the only acts on the bill that worked without simultaneous entertainment in the end rings.<sup>19</sup>

Victoria proclaims that she never liked the "artificial" title "Princess", which was coined by the Sells-Floto management, and that she never wore tights as shown in the "Princess Victoria" poster. She wore a dress while doing her wire act. Tights were reserved for those times in earlier years before Clara Grow joined the Codonas troupe, when Victoria climbed the rigging to assist her brothers in the flying act. Her primary task was to time the return of the fly-bar so that Alfredo could return to the platform after each leap.

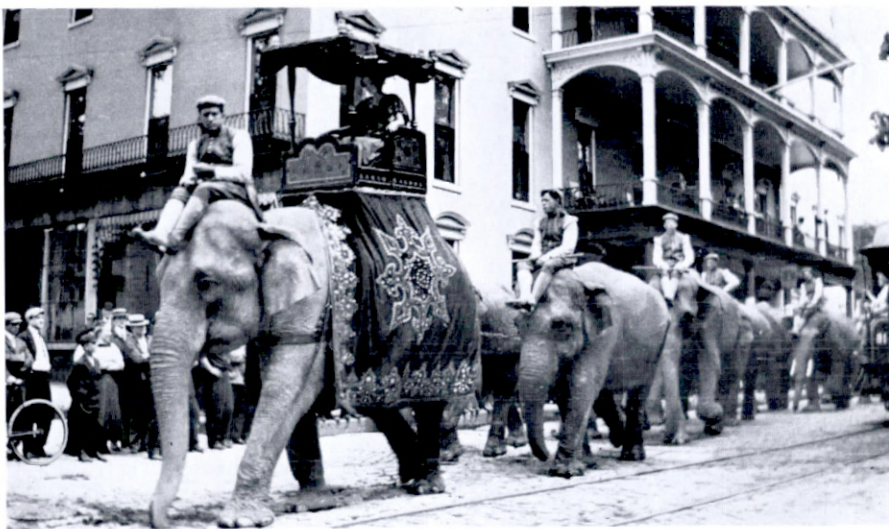
Prior commitments with a number of fairs required the Codonas to leave the Sells-Floto Circus on June 21.<sup>20</sup> The Flying Nelsons were booked to replace them, and later in the season, Jack Dempsey, the great and famous fighter, joined the show for two stretches.

The Tennessee State Fair in Nashville in September, 1919 set an all time attendance record with 134,122 patrons.<sup>21</sup> Portions of this gigantic crowd were entertained on the midway by Victoria's slack-wire wonders. After the fair, Victoria and the Flying Codonas joined the Pubillones Circus in Cuba for the winter of 1919-1920.

In the spring of 1920, the Sells-Floto Circus opened at the Coliseum in Chicago. There, Alfredo Codona publicly presented his first triple somersault. Although Princess Victoria was again featured among six different wire acts, after 1920 the record of her wire-walking days fades as Alfredo's legendary flying fame brightens.

In June, 1920, Victoria received word from Salina, Kansas where her husband operated an automotive garage, that he was seriously ill and required surgery.<sup>22</sup> She immediately left Sells-Floto never to return. When her spouse

**Even the principal performers had to make parade on the Barnum show. Victoria is seen here in the elephant hodah during the 1912 season. Circus World Museum collection.**



**Alfredo and Victoria pose in the back yard of the Barnum show in 1911. Circus World Museum collection.**

recovered, Victoria went to Brazil and joined her brothers who were touring South America during the winter of 1920-1921. Later in 1921, Alfredo took out his own short lived circus in Mexico, while Victoria returned to Kansas.

In Kansas, Victoria explains, the people were nice, but the winters were too cold. The Adolphs relocated in California where a second son was born in 1926, and where William later opened a service station in Waleria. Victoria raised her children and also devoted much of her time working at a child welfare agency for 16 years.

In 1939 the Adolphs moved to Palm Springs, California—Victoria's circus life being left to her memories and those of her family and friends. Victoria Codona Adolph remembers her fairy tale style career, as being rewarding in many ways, but also difficult. "All through the years, I only wanted a home. I used to look at the lighted windows of houses in every new town and wonder why those people would ever leave their homes to go the





Thousands of patrons swarm the midway of Barnum & Bailey in 1912 just before the doors are opened. The tent

beyond the marquee is the menagerie, a small portion of the big top is at the left. Circus World Museum collection.



Victoria and Alfredo Codona are shown here outside their car on the Wirth Bros.

Circus train in Australia in 1913. Circus World Museum collection.

circus."<sup>23</sup> Herself having been part of the reason, she must certainly know the answer.

Now a brightly colored circus poster which exists only in a handful of collections, reminds us that Princess Victoria was real, and her legacy can be shared by those who stare in wonder.

#### NOTES

1. John A. Dingess Manuscript, Hertzberg Collection, San Antonio Public Library, San Antonio, Texas, pg. 134 and *White Tops*, Nov. 1931, pg. 3.

2. Otto Ringling to Eduardo Codona telegram, Victoria Codona Adolph Collection.

3. *New York Clipper*, April 10, 1909, pg. 236. Similar review

in *The Show World*, April 10, 1909, pg. 26.

4. The Basis for this impressionistic physical description is from: Bernice Beekman, "La Belle Victoria", *Palm Springs Villager*, April 1956, pg. 12 and Marilyn Parkinson-Victoria Codona Adolph interviews, Feb. 1979.

5. B.F. Keith's Amusement Enterprises contract with Victoria Codona, Victoria Codona Adolph Collection.

6. *Billboard*, Feb. 3, 1912, pg. 32.

7. *Billboard*, March 9, 1912, pg. 22.

8. *New York Clipper*, March 30, 1912, pg. 11.

9. *Billboard*, July 6, 1912, pg. 22.

10. *Billboard*, Aug. 3, 1912, pg. 23.

11. Marilyn Parkinson-Victoria Codona Adolph interviews, Feb. 1979.

12. *Billboard*, Nov. 2, 1912, pg. 22.

13. An example of these Wirth Bros. Circus one sheet reader-style posters can be found in the Victoria Codona Adolph Collection in Palm Springs.

14. *Billboard*, Dec. 20, 1913, pg. 22.

15. Marilyn Parkinson-Victoria Codona Adolph interviews, Feb. 1979.

16. Barnum & Bailey Circus Souvenir Programs 1916 and 1917, various editions; numerous secondary sources; and Fred W. Glasier photograph of Seigrist-Silbon flyers at the Ringling Museum of the Circus, Sarasota, Florida (see: *Bandwagon*, July-Aug., 1965, pg. 23).

17. "Ringling" to Alfredo Codona telegram (Charles, Alf. T., and John were the only brothers living at this time), Victoria Codona Adolph Collection.

18. *Billboard*, Feb. 8, 1919, pg. 29.

19. Sells-Floto Circus Souvenir Program, 1919.

20. *Billboard*, July 5, 1919, pg. 42.

21. *Billboard*, Oct. 4, 1919, pg. 48.

22. *Billboard*, June 26, 1920, pg. 70.

23. Marilyn Parkinson-Victoria Codona Adolph interviews, Feb., 1979.

A very special thanks goes to Victoria Codona Adolph of Palm Springs, Calif., for recollections which she shared, and for granting access to her circus collection to Marilyn Parkinson of Baraboo, Wis., whom I also thank for providing tape recordings of interviews of Victoria that she made in Feb., 1979. Thank you to Dr. William Adolph and his wife Vida of Palm Springs, and Victoria's grandson, Guillermo Eduardo Adolph-Codona for their assistance in obtaining pictures and information. My gratitude is also extended to my wife Karen; Robert Parkinson also of Baraboo; Dr. John D. Draper of Bethany, W. Va.; Dean Jensen of Colgate, Wis.; Geoff Greaves of Charlestown, Australia; and John Lentz of Sarasota, Fla., for their valuable assistance and/or inspiration. Finally, I must note the Circus World Museum Research Center in Baraboo with its archives and files which made this research project possible.

**The Sells-Floto Circus, with its notably expanded program in 1919, unquestionably became the world's second largest circus. Circus World Museum collection.**





## The 1980 CHS Convention by Fred D. Pfening, III

The 1980 CHS convention officially opened on the 4th of July with most of the attendees spending the day at the parade staging area in the Sauk County Fairgrounds. A great deal of fellowship was in evidence as old friendships were renewed and new ones made. Some members brought photograph albums which were avidly studied, while others shot bulls and cut up jack pots. Naturally, everyone toured the fairgrounds lot taking pictures, and watching the parade preparations. One member commented he spent the day "listening to wheels," a remark that can be appreciated only by other aficionados. The feeling and camaraderie was reminiscent of afternoons spent years ago on the Milwaukee lakefront.

The highlight of the convention was the horse-drawn parade through the streets of Baraboo on July 5. It took exactly one hour for the parade to pass and many members watched it from spots where they could see it both coming and going. It received much critical acclaim from the convention goers, and fared well in the inevitable comparisons made between it and the earlier ones in Milwaukee. The only sour notes came from the many severely-sunburned members whose enthusiasm for the event overruled their will for self preservation.

That evening the tired but happy multitudes assembled at Pierce's Supper Club for the first of three banquets all ably produced by CHS member Ralph Pierce and his staff. President Tom Parkinson made some brief welcoming remarks. He singled out Joe Rettinger for bringing the most new members into the organization during the past year, and Ed and Jean Jones for the excellent job they have done in keeping the society's books. He also recognized old friends, Art Stensvad, a charter member and former president, and Alex Clark, pioneer calliope historian and collector. Both these men, well known to the membership, were attending their first convention, and it was the first time many people had the opportunity to meet them after years of corresponding.

Sunday, July 6, began early as the Al Ringling Theater had a special members-only showing of old circus films. This was a switch from the usual films seen at CHS and CFA conventions as all the films were from Hollywood and included "Peck's Bad Boy at the Circus," and "Chad Hanna." Members wandered freely through the theater between films, many viewing the scenery from the old Ringling Cinderella spec, which has been stored in the theater since the 1910's. The back drop on the stage was manufactured by the Chicago firm of Sossman and Landis, who did much of the spec scenery for the Ringling circus in the early 1900's. Under the management of CHS member Bill Metzger, the theater has been renovated and is well on its way to regaining its past glory.

That afternoon the membership convened at Pierce's for the historical session. Stuart Thayer shared his work on American animal

trainers before Van Amburgh, and John Polacek proposed creating a central repository for route information, and encouraged increased activity in collecting and cataloging route information. Dr. Roland Gibbs gave a report on the effect pending federal legislation will have on circus animal acts, and Chappie Fox told how the entire population of Ringling, Oklahoma, all 1100 of them, saw the Greatest Show on Earth as the Felds' guests.

The session was concluded with an interview of F. Beverly Kelley, retired head of the Ringling press department and press agent par excellence, in which he related many interesting facets of his eventful career with the railroad circuses. Kelley held the audience spellbound in discussing his experiences with the Ringling, Cole, and Dailey shows, advancing legitimate theatrical productions, and how he came to write his famous articles on the circus for *National Geographic*.

That evening the second banquet was held. After the meal, the members were treated to another interview with a circus great—this time D.R. Miller, owner of the Carson and Barnes Circus. Miller charmed the audience in recounting his nearly fifty year career as a showman. He discussed his early days with his father and brothers, stating among other things that the "Al. G." in his old title Al. G. Kelly and Miller Bros. was stolen from the Al. G. Barnes title because he liked its sound. He also said his desire to run a railroad circus was never fulfilled, although he came close to buying the Dailey show in 1950, and the Beatty show six years later. He broke up the room with his humorous account of his not-at-all-funny experiences with a boat circus in 1963. The CHS was honored to have in its presence a man who knows how to run a truck circus as well as Jess Adkins or W.W. Cole knew how to run a railroad show.

The morning and afternoon of the convention's final day were spent at the Circus World Museum's fine library. Bob and Greg Parkinson graciously gave tours of its treasures, covering all the aspects of its holdings. That evening the closing banquet was held. John Herriott spoke about his own and his family's long affiliation with circuses, and shared his philosophy on animal training. As with the other interviews with people in the circus business, this too was very interesting. Greg Parkinson then presented a multi-media presentation he had developed on the history of the circus. It used film footage and slides of lithographs from the Circus World Museum's collection.

The convention closed with a surprise as Fred Pfening was honored for his twenty years of service to the organization as editor of the *Bandwagon*. Copies of all 113 issues Pfening has edited were strung around the room, dramatically illustrating how extensive this labor of love has been. Tom Parkinson read letters of congratulations from many prominent showmen and historians, and presented him with a plaque in honor of his work for the Circus Historical Society. Pfening received a standing ovation from the audience.

Even at a convention with so many different and exciting activities as this one had, the star attraction still remains the visiting between members. It is this sharing of a common passion—be it a discussion of the Vargas performance, the 1903 Barnum & Bailey parade, or how best to store couriers—that will probably resonate in the convention goers' memories longer than anything else. All of those who attended the convention will attest that it is a rare experience, almost a privilege, to be able to talk freely and until all hours of the night with someone else who is equally fascinated with the history of the circus. Add to that a unique parade, papers on circus history, circus greats and the best circus research library and museum in the country, and you know why the 1980 Circus Historical Society convention was such a success.

### Registration List, 1980 CHS Convention

Donald L. Hensley, Kenosha, Wisconsin; Tom Parkinson, Savoy, Ill.; Ed Cripps, Bradford, Ont., Can.; P.B. Butler, Strathray, Ont.; Bob Houston, Philadelphia, Pa.; Earl Schmid, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Mr. and Mrs. Samuel H. Wyatt, Camden, N.J.; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Gonzales, Sarasota, Fla.; Boyd Bailey, Maple Plain, Minn.; Stephen Olds, Bradford, Ont., Can.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Stensvad, North Platte, Neb.; Tom Barron, Framington, Mass.; Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Brown, Edmonton, Alta., Can.; H.K. Bowles, Spokane, Wash.; Mr. and Mrs. Russ Tully, San Francisco, Calif.; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sabia, Grosse Point, Mich.; Mr. and Mrs. Harold Stekley, Cary, Illinois; Mr. and Mrs. James Dunwoody, Mooretown, N.J.; Mr. and Mrs. John Phillips, Glen Rock, N.J.; Richard Flint, Washington, D.C.

Mr. and Mrs. Hardy O'Neal, Shreveport, La.; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hill, Aurora, Ill.; Whitey Savage, Tucson, Ariz.; Mrs. Judith Dakin, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Copeland McAlister, Framingham, Mass.; John Teague, Framingham, Mass.; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Simmons, Chicago, Ill.; Mr. and Mrs. Norman Pike, Marshalltown, Iowa; Mr. and Mrs. E. Clark Beurlen, Columbia, Mo.; Mr. and Mrs. Dale Riker, Flint, Mich.

Mr. and Mrs. John Holley, Shell Rock, Iowa; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Parkinson, Baraboo, Wis.; Gaylord Hartman (and daughter), Washington, Pa.; George Morrison, Pittsfield, Mass.; Michael Fievet; Mr. and Mrs. Henry Magnin, Van Nuys, Calif.; Hunt Bushnell, El Monte, Calif.; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Columbus, Ohio; Fred D. Pfening, III, Columbus, Ohio; Mr. and Mrs. John Polacek, Elyria, Ohio.

Hans Dulle, Jefferson City, Mo.; Mr. and Mrs. C.P. Fox, Winter Haven, Fla.; Albert Conover, Xenia, Ohio; W.A. Myers, Akron, Ohio; Rosalee Hoffman, Chicago, Ill.; Howard Miller, Ashtabula, Ohio; Bruce R. Henninger, Princeton, N.J.; Mr. and Mrs. Walter Searfoss; Mr. and Mrs. Harold Flint, Fargo, N.D.; Mr. and Mrs. Hicks, Memphis, Tenn.

J. Kurt Spence, Doylestown, Pa.; Mr. and Mrs. Edward L. Jones, Zanesville, Ohio; Mr. and Mrs. F. Beverly Kelley, St. Louis, Mo.; E.B. Swerdfeger, Garden Grove, Calif.; Howard (Doc) Hayden, Anaheim, Calif.; Mr. and Mrs. Dan Draper, Bethany, W.Va.; Robert Timmel, Louisville, Ky.; Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Yaden, Delavan, Wis.; Bill Rhodes, Louisville, Ky.; Frank Hall.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Dahlinger, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Julian Jimenez, Atchison, Kan.; John L. Sullivan, Concordia, Kansas; Stuart Thayer, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Alexander P. Clark, Princeton, N.J.; Dr. and Mrs. Roland F. Gibbs, Fairfield, Iowa; James M. Pitts, Travelers Rest, S.C.; Joseph Rettinger, Phoenix, Ariz.; J. George Disk, Augusta, Ga.; Ralph Henderson, Spokane, Wash.

Richard Lobar, Indianapolis, Ind.; Francis Meeker, Troy, N.Y.; Mr. and Mrs. Gene Jurewicz, Tinley Park, Ill.; Ted Bowman, Dallas, Texas; Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Booker, San Francisco, Calif.; Mr. and Mrs. Michael Brown, Bloomington, Minn.; Mr. John Kunz, Jamestown, N.Y.; Mr. and Mrs. Percy Turner, San Diego, Calif.; Bob Neilson, Warrenton, Va.; Don Francis, Baraboo, Wisconsin; Herbie Head, Detroit, Mich.; Forrest L. Taylor, Circleville, Ohio.





## Loaded Flat Cars

## Season of 1949

This remarkable set showing each of the 16 loaded Cole Bros. flat cars at Lawrence, Kan., Sept. 28, 1949, was taken by Jim McRoberts. It is impossible to distinguish the numbers on some of the flats so this set will be numbered 1 through 16. They will be run here in the same order as the Train Loading Order at Sioux City, Iowa, July 25, 1949, which was printed in the Cole Bros.

1949 article in the May-June 1980 *Bandwagon*, although it is obvious the flats were not in the same sequence. Each flat seems to have been loaded with the same vehicles although not always in the same order from front to rear. The caption for each photo will list the wagons from right to left. The make of the flat car will be given immediately following the number.



Photo No. 1—Flat Car No. 1 (Warren); Fordson tractor; No. 82, menagerie props and concessions; Fordson tractor; No. 2 Chevrolet truck; No. 80, stake & chain.



Photo No. 2—Flat Car No. 2 (Warren)—No. 100, light plant for runs; No. 21,

cookhouse boiler wagon (new in 1949); No. 20, commissary and refrigerator; No. 22, dining tent and equipment; No. 23, range wagon (new in 1949)

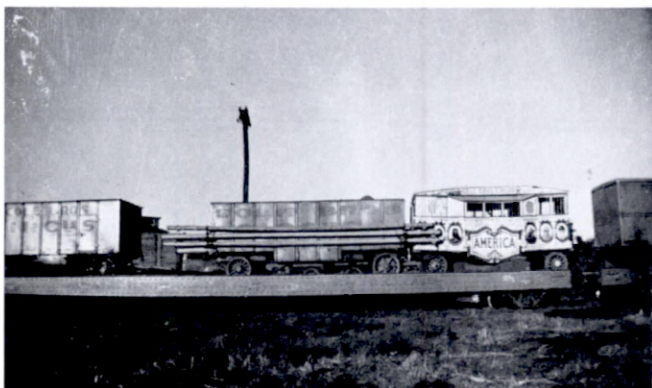


Photo No. 3—Flat Car No. 3 (Warren)—America steam calliope; No. 42, menagerie poles; No. 40, menagerie canvas.

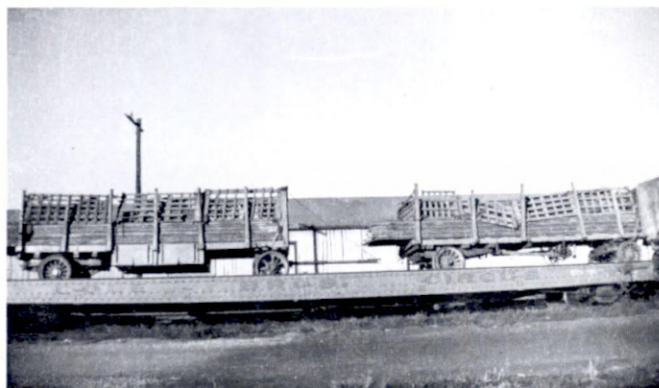


Photo No. 4—Flat Car No. 4 (Warren)—No. 101, jacks & stringers; No. 102, jacks & stringers.



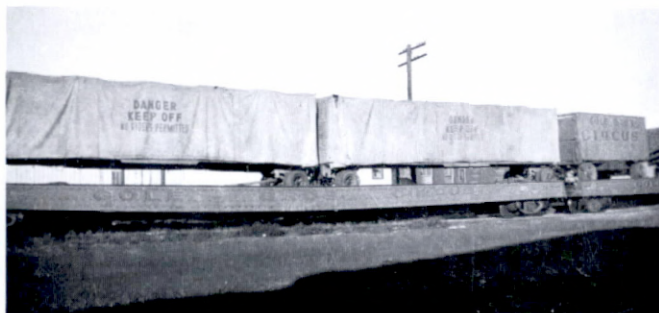


Photo No. 5—Flat Car No. 5 (Warren)—No. 60, side show panel; No. 61, side show panel. (Both new in 1949).

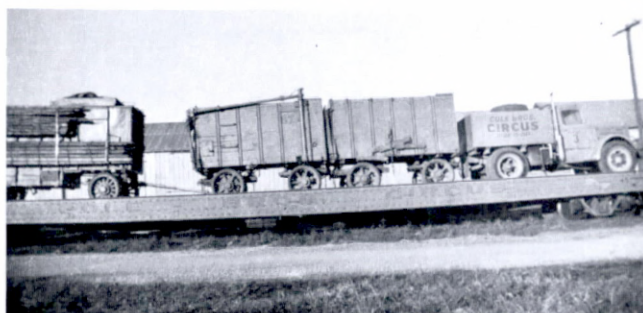


Photo No. 6—Flat Car No. 6 (Warren)—No. 3, Mack truck; No. 88, big top canvas; No. 87, big top canvas; No. 70, pad room & horse tent.

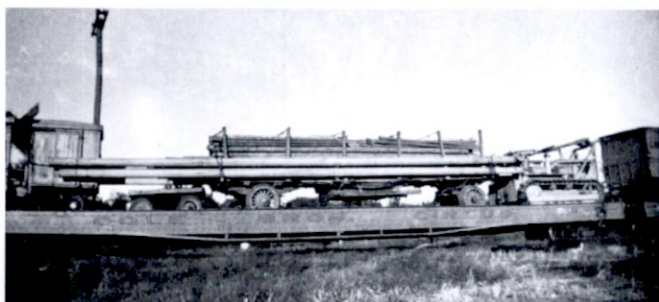


Photo No. 7—Flat Car No. 7 (Warren)—Caterpillar tractor; Big top pole wagon; small gilly wagon loaded between the poles (not on train loading order); Stake driver.



Photo No. 8—Flat Car No. 8 (Warren)—Caterpillar tractor; No. 51, light plant; No. 50, light plant; No. 52 light plant.



Photo No. 9—(Mt. Vernon) No. 1 Mack truck; Caterpillar tractor loaded on dolly trailer; Office & gen. admission ticket wagon; Station wagon.

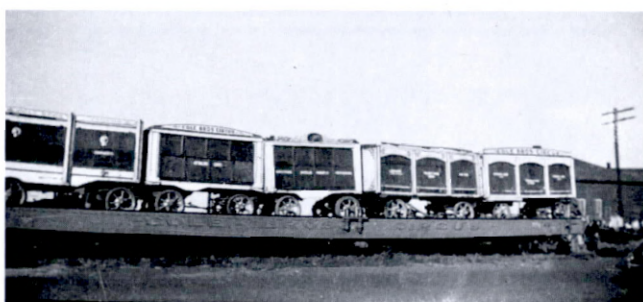


Photo No. 10—Flat Car No. 10 (Warren) Cage No. 17; Cage No. 10; Cage No. 8; Cage No. 12; Cage No. 16.

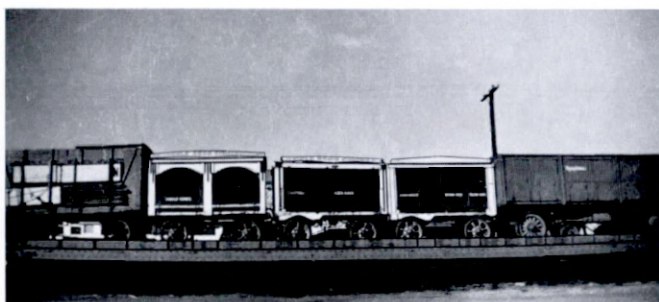


Photo No. 11—Flat Car No. 11 (new car used first time in 1949, make of car unknown) No. 14, hippo cage; Cage No. 9; Cage No. 15; Cage No. 18; Baggage wagon (number not known, may be No. 37)



Photo No. 12—Flat Car No. 12 (old style Mt. Vernon)—Zachinni cannon; truck No. 72, wardrobe; No. 92 seat plants (stake) (new in 1949).





Photo No. 13—Flat Car No. 13 (Mt. Vernon) Concession stand; Concession stand; Concession stand; Concession stand. (All 4 wagons new in 1949).

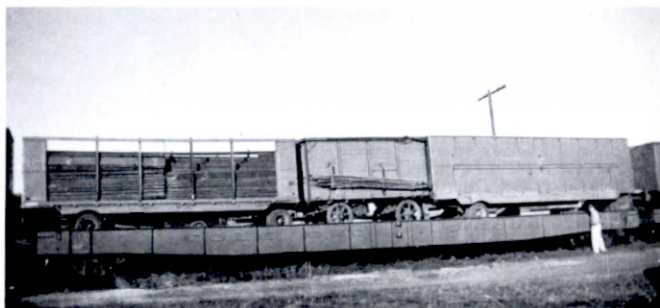


Photo No. 14—Flat Car No. 14 (Mt. Vernon)—No. 85, seat chairs (new in 1949); No. 89, seats; No. 84, seat planks (stake) (new in 1949).

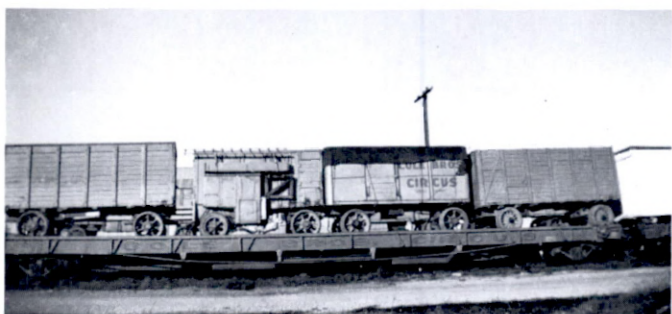


Photo No. 15—Flat Car No. 15 (built from cut down stock car in 1941) No. 81, props; No. 73, wardrobe; No. 52, props; No. 75, props.

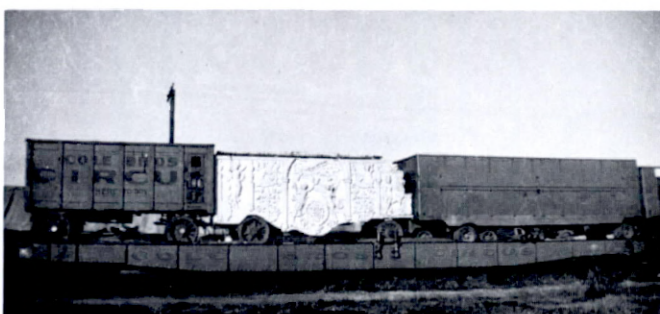


Photo No. 16—Flat Car No. 16 (Mt. Vernon) No. 86, seat chairs (new in 1949); Columbia tableau, res. seat ticket wagon; No. 74, dogs, props, wardrobe.









# SOME CLASS DISTINCTIONS IN THE EARLY CIRCUS AUDIENCE

by Stuart Thayer

It is possible that the single event in circus history most often referred to is George Washington's visit to Ricketts' Circus in April, 1793. As a social event it is unimportant, but seems to appeal to circus historians for the status such a visit lends to the institution of the circus. Certainly, if the President of the United States allows himself to be seen at an equestrian performance it speaks well for the social acceptability of the entertainment. That it might speak ill of the intellectual powers of our first president doesn't seem to have occurred to any of the commentators of the event.

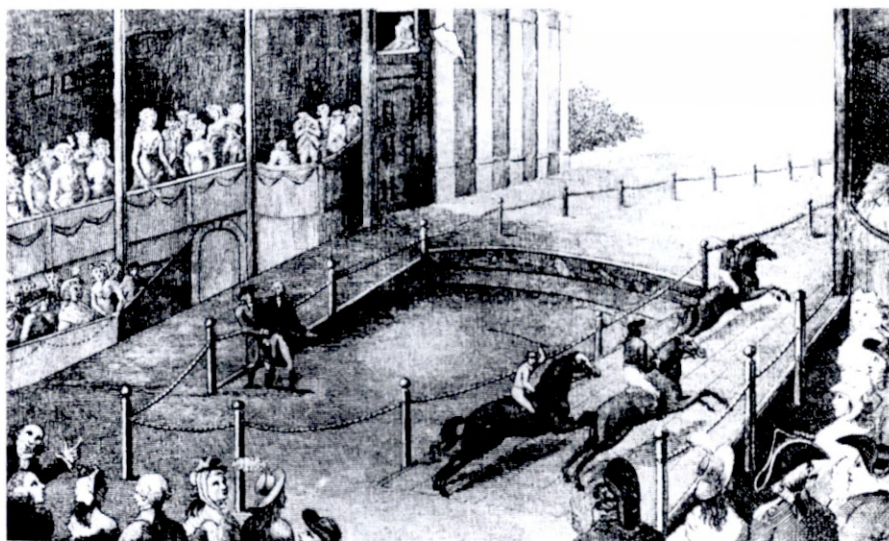
Washington's biographers give us a picture of the man as one who was secure in his social position, certainly sure of his own ability, perhaps a bit stuffy by contemporary standards, thus somewhat humorless and certainly no intellect. Perhaps Northern Virginia farmers are still this way. In short, we are not surprised at his enjoying an equestrian performance.

However, the importance of the event seems to us to lie in its indication that an upper-middle class gentleman felt it was worth his while to attend the circus. And to attend it more than the single time that might be expected of any curious mind. It leads us to ask who it was that comprised that early audience and what they added to the scene.

Ricketts, and those who followed him in presenting indoor shows, kept very close to a pattern in arena construction in America. It was based on the London and Paris amphitheatres, which were in turn based on the theatre. The circus might be said to be a theatre with the ring scooped out of the middle. The seating was divided into boxes and pit, just as in the theatre, the stage, where it existed, was no different than that of the theatre. The one common difference was the lack of seats, or of very many, in the pit at the circus.

Thus we have the ring with its low, solid wooden fencing (the lower, solid wood curbs did not come into use until the 1850's) surrounded by the pit area which was in turn surrounded by the boxes. Outside the boxes was the narrow corridor by which one reached them. All this gave the buildings their predominantly circular shape. It was not unusual to let a stage into the circle, thus making of the ring of boxes a horseshoe. Entrances from the stables were usually on one or both sides of the stage and the orchestra pit was between stage and ring.

The boxes were quite low, three or four feet from the ground, giving in these low buildings a view over the pit audience, which usually stood. The area beneath the boxes was useless unless, as in some cases, the boxes were built high enough to expand the pit area. We have seen this referred to as the gallery upon occasion and entrance to it was cheaper than to the pit. In the theatre, of course, the gallery was



**Ricketts' Amphitheatre, Philadelphia, 1797. While this print is confusing in that the ramps for the pony races are in place, the relationship between the boxes and the pit is indicated. The standees in the pit encircle the stage (and the race ramps), while above them appear the occupants of the boxes. The figure at the top of the print waving the flag is the starter for the races. The orchestra pit at center is empty because the show proper has not yet begun. The races were held in advance of the circus performance. (Courtesy of The Historical Society of York County, Pennsylvania)**

behind the boxes and slightly higher so that standees there looked over the boxes to the stage. In time the gallery was expanded, seats were installed and today we have them as balconies in our theatres, the boxes having gone by the board.

By making boxes available the circus proprietors, as did the theatre owners, set up social distinctions among their patrons. The boxes were more expensive, usually fifty percent more, though at times only twenty-five percent more, so one bought a ticket to the boxes if one could afford it. They were partitioned one from another and each had three to five benches in it, no small amenity for a show lasting two hours or more. In choosing to sit in a box the customer indicated that he could afford it and that he preferred sitting to standing during the performance and that he preferred more private company than the pit provided.

The pit cost fifty cents as a rule until the panic of 1819 when it dropped to twenty-five cents where it stayed until the twentieth century. The audience there either stood or sat

upon the ground. It was the practice to bring food and drink to entertainments, and in fact most of one's valuables in the sense that leaving them at home unattended was no wiser in that day than now, especially for the lower class.

The pit audience ate, drank, cracked walnuts; they conversed, walked about, conducted business, there being nothing to confine them inside the pit as the seats do today. They were not above commenting on the performance, the music and each other. Since the spoken word was at a minimum during most of the arena activity opportunities to disrupt the performance were much less in the circus than in the theatre, but a poor showing might well elicit comments that reached a performer's ear. Drunkenness in public gatherings was common then when there was no police presence or laws against such behavior. Circuses in larger cities had bars in the building and intermissions for refreshment were part of the program.

From the demeanor and manners of the pit audience, the raucousness of which is chronicled as far back as Shakespeare's time, we would assume that a merchant, for example, would not want his wife and daughters to be there so he would place them in a box. One dollar, the usual charge for a seat in a box, represented a week's wages for some people. From this we might deduce that the middle class sat in the boxes, the laboring class in the pit.

Unfortunately, the observations of persons attending the circus which have survived have all been of middle and upper-middle class origin. When newspapers refer to the mix of the audience they use the term "fashionable" as in the phrase, "The Circus was attended on Monday evening by a large and fashionable audience..." which was printed in the *Rhode Island American* on January 9, 1827. Or the



statement from the *Columbian Centinel* of November 15, 1815, "The taste for Equestrian Exhibitions has much increased and fashionable crowds and respected families (are seen) at the Circus." From these and their like we assume community leaders, in either social or business matters, attended the shows. As in so much history we run the risk of reporting only about an elite, if these were our only sources. They reinforce our belief that there were class distinctions in the audience, but leaves the unlettered portion without a voice. Fortunately, there is one source of information about conduct generally and this is the advertisements for circus performances.

We infer that if a proprietor notes that something is forbidden in his hall it has occurred often enough to disrupt the show. For instance, a warning against whistling during the performance because it makes the horses stop seems to us to indicate it happened too often for orderly performances. Smoking cigars was generally forbidden, as much because of the fire hazard as for sanitary reasons in the unventilated buildings. Bringing dogs to the circus was often forbidden in advertisements, probably because they were noisy and had the habit of staling where they willed.

In 1826 Nathan Howes felt bound, during a stand in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to warn that any person moving from pit to box would forfeit his ticket and have to leave the circus. [*Portsmouth Journal*, December 16, 1826.] The temptation to occupy an empty seat was apparently too much for some pit occupants.

It was not uncommon for a troupe in the 1820's to announce that "rigid police" would be in attendance to preserve order and decorum. Rigid meaning, in eighteenth century usage, severe or stern. As we mentioned, there were no municipal police to attend to such functions.

In 1817 we find the first reference to whores in the audience, though in theatre annals they appear almost as early as actors. James West, showing in Boston in July of that year felt compelled to announce that no females of a certain description would be admitted in the boxes. [*Columbian Centinel* (Boston), May 10, 1817.] His concern must have been that since the boxes were where middle-class ladies sat there would be no place acceptable to them if prostitutes could sit there, too. His warning was common in the period following it and all through the years that circuses were confined to buildings.

One presence in the modern (i.e., post Civil War) circus that was not in the early nineteenth century one was children. Whereas we have come to think of a circus performance as something for children, they were by no means in any numbers in that early audience. The society of the time saw no reason to entertain children, there was little enough for adults. Children were treated as small adults and pretty well confined to the domestic circle until their early teens. The circus audience was itself rather immature, by our intellectual standards. West T. Hill says of theatre audiences of the time that they were primarily middle class and seeking contrived endings, slapstick farces and sentimental comedies. No Shakespeare, no Racine, no Moliere for them. The circus

## NEW CIRCUS—Washington City.

Care to our coffin adds a nail no doubt,  
While merry Laughter nimbly draws one out.

On This Evening, March 8, 1821.

For the Benefit of

MESSRS. LAWSON & BURSLEM,

Who, anxious to please the public, have selected such amusement as cannot fail to give general satisfaction. For this night only, and first time here, will be brought forward the popular melo dramatic spectacle of

**SYDNEY AND HIS DOG;**

Or, *The Treacherous Indian.*

The Dog trained by Mr. W. West for the express purpose.

Sidney	Mrs. Yeaman
Bill Bunting, Boatwain of the Grapling, Mr. Lawson	
Jack Mainmast	Burslem
Tom Halyard	Belmont
Jack Ratlin	Carica
Matilla, Sidney's wife,	Mrs. West
Theodore, Sidney's child,	Mrs. West
Indians.	

Attapa, an Indian Chief,	W. West
quacko	Rogers
Transgenum	Sinclair

Attendants and Indians by the rest of the company.

First time here.

## FEATS OF CHIVALRY,

by Messrs. Lawson, Rogers, Gurnes, and Stutchbury.

First time here.

## Ground and Lofly Tumbling,

by Belmont, Champlin, Welson, and Yeaman, Clown.

Extraordinary Exercises by the grand troop of Voltiguers and Flying Vaulters.

## SLACK WIRE.

by Miss Dupree, who will fire a Pistol, and extinguish 100 candles at once, a feat never attempted by any other person.

In the course of the evening, the comic Song of the Corn Cobs by Mr. Burslem.

## EQUESTRIAN EXERCISES;

By Master Gurnes, a native of America.

## GRAND ENTREE.

With a magnificent display of beautiful Horses. To conclude with an Arabian Horse dancing to the tune of Nancy Dawson.

In the course of the Evening, the comic song of OH! CRUEL!

Female Ballad Singer  
Fidler

Mr. Burslem  
Yeaman

## HORSEMANSHIP.

By Mr. Rogers, the Flying Vaulteur.

In the course of the evening, the comic Song of the Dandies, or nothing like Fashion, by Mr. Burslem.

## THE PEASANT'S FROLIC.

Or, *The Ladies' Fashions in France*, by Master Yeaman.

When he will go through all his wonderful performances and conclude by riding on his head on a Pint Mug.

The performance to conclude with

*Mr. and Mrs. Button's Journey to Brenford.*

Mr. Button	Mr. Lawson
Mrs. Button	Stutchbury
Riding Master	W. West
Clown	Welsh

Tickets to be had at Mr. Ronckendorff's Confectionery Store.

\* Doors open at 6, and performance commence at 7 o'clock. BOX 75 cents; PIT 50 cents—Children under 12 years of age 25 cents.

N.B. Smoking will not be permitted in the Circus. Seats are partitioned off at each end of the Pit for colored People.

mar 8 -

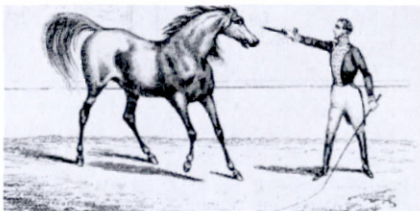
In 1821 the West Circus presented a combination circus and theatrical show, a common combination during the period. The ad stated that smoking was not allowed at the circus, and noted where the downtown advance ticket sale would be. The reference to segregated seating is no surprise as Washington, D.C. was essentially a Southern city at the time. (Courtesy of Fred D. Pfening III)

audience, being even less intellectual than that of the theatre, must have been poor clay indeed, for all they watched were athletic skills. It can be seen from this that circus proprietors had no need to cater to children and they didn't until their adult audience began to abandon them in favor of other types of popular entertainment. When children were finally

admitted at half-price it was not usual to let them sit in the boxes unless they paid full fare.

One class of society that apparently was wanted, but could only be admitted freely in the North was black people. Most theatres prohibited attendance by blacks, North and South; the circus had no such rule, but was forced by local convention in Baltimore or anywhere south of there to either prohibit them or segregate them.

The first notice of this treatment is dated May, 1799 when John Bill Ricketts played Annapolis, Maryland. He advertised standing places for colored people at half price. [*Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis), May 23, 1799.] In Richmond in 1810 Pepin and Breschard charged a lower admission for colored people. [*The Enquirer* (Richmond), May 10 to 25, 1810.] James West in Baltimore in December, 1817 said that people of color would not be admitted, but either local slaveholders or a lack of ticket buyers caused him to relent and he reserved a space on each end of the pit for blacks. [*American & Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore), December 10, 1817.] The same proprietor partitioned off the back of the pit for people of color in Washington in 1817 [*National Intelligencer* (Washington), January 13 to February 24, 1819], and Price and Simpson provided seats on the left hand side of the pit in Savannah in 1823. (*Savannah Daily Republican*, December 15, 1823.)



One last view of this segregation is the 1827 New Orleans visit of the North American Circus where parquetttes—or boxes—were fitted up for free people of color and a separate place was reserved for black people. [*Louisiana Gazette* (New Orleans), March 9 to April 20, 1827.] This in obedience to the Louisiana convention of having a sort of apartheid based on three skin colors.

All these audience distinctions changed in the 1830's when the circus obtained its own theatre, the canvas tent. Grimsted refers to the theatre audience as being divided socially by box, pit and gallery and then divided again by specialization as each type of theatre found its own hall. [David Grimsted, *Melodrama Unveiled* (Chicago, 1968).] By this he meant drama, opera, vaudeville, burlesque, etc., not by those names and not all at once, of course. The circus with its canvas tent drew away from an audience made up exclusively of city dwellers and the competition of many types of entertainment. It moved to the smaller western towns and a more homogenous audience where the only distinction was that between general admission and reserved seats. The class distinctions disappeared as did the classes themselves. The small town audience presented other problems, but they rose from the nature of the towns themselves and must be the subject of other research.



# RINGLING'S ROUTE TO ROME

a unique episode in circus advertising

By John Lentz

In July 1935, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey was playing its traditional stands along New York State's Southern Tier. The show made Schenectady on the ninth, moved to Utica on the tenth and was billed to appear in Binghamton on the eleventh. But, the Binghamton date was suddenly stricken from the route—a cancellation that led to a number of unprecedented events and a rare demonstration of how quickly the Big Show's management could move to prevent the loss of a show date.

While in Schenectady on the ninth, show officials were notified that flood waters were dangerously mounting over much of the Southern Tier area. Binghamton, having felt the full havoc of the flood, was cut off entirely from outside communication. It could not be reached by road or rail. Should the show blow the date there on the eleventh or try to route it elsewhere? That was the problem confronting and confusing two men: Sam Gumpertz, the general manager, and Roland Butler, the press chief.

Around midnight of July ninth—only 36 hours before the date in Binghamton was cancelled—Gumpertz made a bold decision in

the old show-must-go-on tradition. He would move the circus to Rome, New York, a city of about 32,000 population. With but one day to spare, what could be done to alert the people of Rome that the circus would make this unexpected visit to their city?

Enter Butler who was ahead of the show. By phone, he and Gumpertz discussed the problem. Butler held that it was a lost cause. Why show when there was no time to post a single bill? Gumpertz, however, was adamant. He demanded that something must be done without delay to spread the news that Ringling was coming to Rome.

Butler saw only one way to reach most of Rome's population quickly and with the greatest impact: through the town's only paper, *The Rome Daily Sentinel*. He roused its editor from bed and told him that the circus wanted a double-page ad to appear in its July tenth issue. It was to proclaim in the boldest or buckeye type that the show would be in Rome on the following day. There was no time to discuss ad rates, contracts for space and the like. Knowing the Ringling reputation, *The Sentinel's* editor cooperated. The result was probably the largest newspaper ad that has

ever appeared in behalf of a circus. It is reproduced here and includes one of Roland Butler's all-time classic lines. The circus, he wrote, was coming to Rome "like a thunder-bolt out of a clear sky!"

The editor of *The Sentinel*—whether by Butler's persuasion or on his own initiative—gave the circus a break that was a press agent's dream. Indeed, the paper's front page was emblazoned by a double-truck headline reading: "RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY'S COMBINED CIRCUS COMING TO ROME THURSDAY, JULY 11." The location of the lot and the time of performances were prominently displayed.

In addition, the front page carried pictures of The Flying Concellos and Dorothy Herbert. Other pages ran photos of Polidor, Ericka Loyal and Col. Tim McCoy. An accompanying story pointed out that the circus was coming to Rome owing to the quickest change in route in circus history. The story stressed that the last-minute decision to appear in Rome did not mean that only a part of the big show would be seen. It was coming "on four trains of 100 double-length railroad cars".

As if this great splash of circus print and

LIKE A THUNDER BOLT OUT OF A CLEAR SKY!

# RINGLING BROS AND BARNUM & BAILEY

## COMBINED CIRCUS

### AT ROME

UPPER N. JAMES STREET SHOW GROUNDS

# TOMORROW

# THURSDAY, JULY 11

at 2 and 8 P. M., the Doors Opening One Hour Earlier to Permit Leisurely Inspection of the Most Splendid Menagerie Mankind Has Ever Gazed Upon—

### 100 Double Length Steel Railroad Cars

Owing to the Quickest Change in Route in the History of Gigantic Amusements, Due to the Disastrous Flood Conditions in the Empire State's Southern Tier, The Greatest Show on Earth, IN ALL ITS VAST ENTIRETY, Will Bring to ROME The Most Colossal Aggregation of Marvels in the History of the World!

Tickets on Sale Thursday at F. M. Hamlin Drug Co., 146 W. Dominick Street



photos were not enough to make sure that every reader of *The Sentinel* got the message loud and clear, the paper went one step further: it labeled itself the "Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus Edition." In fact, reports about the disastrous flood were all but submerged by news that circus day was only a day away.

Thus, without a single bit of advertising other than that in *The Sentinel*, the show's business was reported to have exceeded that done by any circus which had played Rome in over a 20-year period. In this connection, Butler later commented: "This is the initial instance when the power of newspaper advertising, with no other medium included, was ever tried out on a circus. And it worked!"

A newspaper in another town had this to say about the Rome engagement: "And is the circus proud of this feat! It set several records. For one, this instance was the first time the circus was ever lost. Nobody—not even the advance billing staff—could find it or had any idea of where it was. It was the first time that any circus ever pulled into a city and failed to find mail for its performers at the post office. All in all, it is one of the weirdest stories uncovered in American circus history, and one that will be related under the tents for generations to come."

The Rome date is perhaps also the first that was ever arranged entirely by word of mouth or oral agreements between circus and city officials. Even the mayor's consent for the date was obtained by telephone. If the usual legalities which circuses were required to fulfill

### WINDOW CARDS ANYBODY?

1972 RBB&B Clown & Logo .....	\$2.50
1974 RBB&B Charging Lion & Tiger .....	\$2.50
1975 RBB&B Clown on Elephant .....	\$2.50
1976 RBB&B G. Williams Roman Riding Two White Horses .....	\$2.50
100th Anniversary RBB&B Logo .....	\$2.50
Above 5 Window Cards .....	\$10.00 postpaid

**Something different—circus newspaper ads of yesteryear. 25¢, 50¢, \$1.00 or \$2.00. If interested, we will send you a selection on approval. Just tell us the type and amount you would be interested in.**

Also, model circus wagons & baggage horses, new & used circus books, programs, route books, lithos and about everything circus collectible. Send 50¢ stamps or coin for list. Refundable on first order.

485 Sleepy Hollow Road
BETTY SCHMID
Pittsburgh, PA 15228

well in advance of their appearance had been demanded, there would have been no Rome-Ringling date.

On July 25, 1935, Gumpertz wrote a letter to the editor of *The Sentinel* that included these statements:

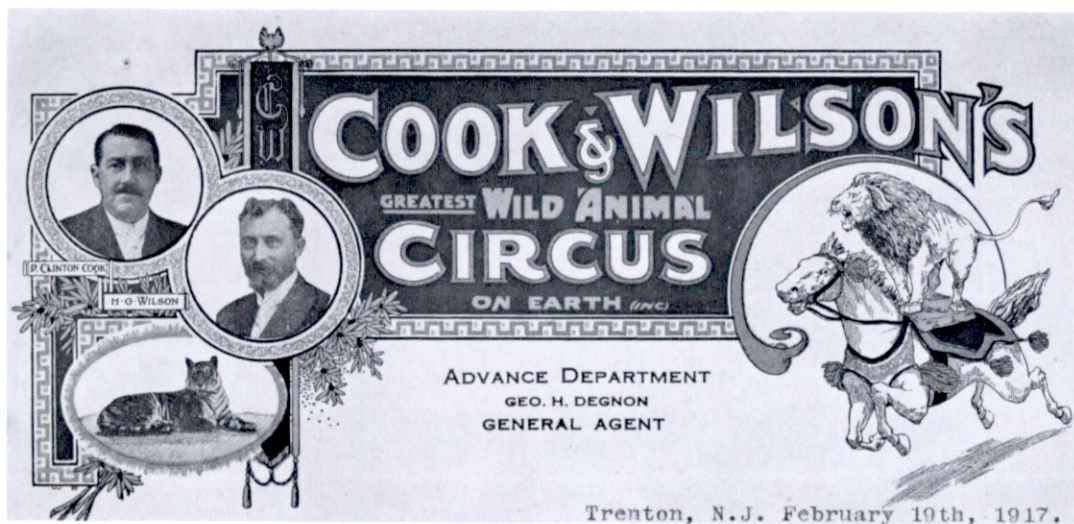
"The remarkable business enjoyed by The Greatest Show on Earth in Rome recently, when it exhibited in your city on only one day's notice due to the quickest change of route in circus annals, following the disastrous floods,

was mainly due to your issue of July 10, the day preceding our engagement in Rome.

"Without a single sheet of billposting, bannering or lithographing matter of any description being used to herald the unexpected visit of the big show, *The Sentinel* quickly carried our message . . . to the people of the city and its surrounding territory.

"We are happy to congratulate *The Rome Daily Sentinel* on an achievement unparalleled in the circus realm . . ."

## Bill Woodcock's Circus Letterheads



The Cook & Wilson Wild Animal Circus toured only one year in 1916. This letter signed by D. Clinton Cook was sent to the Ringling Bros. Circus in 1917 offering like-new grandstand chairs at 40¢ each. The title is outlined in gold on dark blue, wild animal is in green, the photos of the owners are black.



# THE CIRCUS DRAFT HORSE IS PRESERVED BY HIS ART WORK



Faithful Circus Troupers

Print #2—Heavy Horse Series  
"Faithful Troupers"

Two Famous Ringling Percherons  
"Ned" and "Sailor" about 1935

Size 14" x 20" printed on 100 lb.

white vellum stock—suitable for framing

Style "Trompe L'Oeil"—so real as to fool the eye

Price is \$10.00

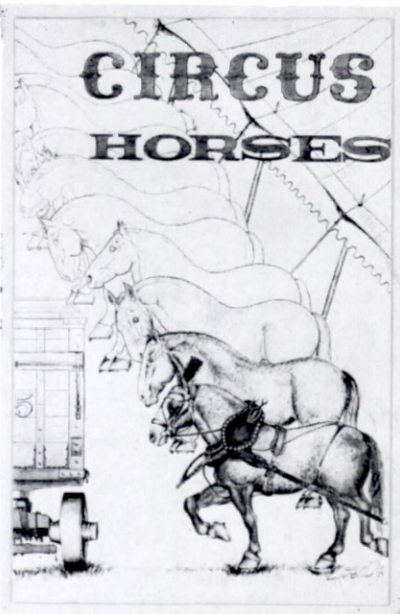
The artist has captured the true draft horse's power, massiveness, strength, dependability, grace, intelligence, and energy in his drawings.

His art comes to full bloom in depicting the lifestyle of these great troupers and their drivers.

Tagged "Faithful Troupers" by all the circus pros, the draft horse (baggage stock) carried the real flavor of a great circus. "With it" from the beginning of the early wagon circus show days—their presence, working on the circus lot, railroad yards and city streets, was the action and magnificence that aroused many thousands of spectators daily to marvel and watch the circus arrive and set up in their town.

The year 1940 marked the last year of the use of this great free attraction in any numbers for the circus. The passing of Jess Adkins, whose showmanship and superb management of great circuses, and always championing the tradition and drawing power of the baggage stock, left the circus public without the teams of fours, sixes, eights and tens that were the heart and soul of the circus. Since that day the public's interest in the circus traditions, nostalgia, and old flavor has ebbed away. In the final analysis, for the public, the drawing power of the circus working horse has never been equaled.

Gone now but not forgotten—you can own this important part of the Golden Age in this series of detail prints—for the first time ever made available by the artist from his originals.



Print #3—Heavy Horse Series  
"Circus Horses"

From silhouette to finished detail  
A study of the Baggage Horse  
in Parade Harness

Size 16" x 23" printed on 100 lb.

white vellum stock—suitable for framing

Price is \$10.00

Mailed in heavy tube, post-paid. California residents add 6% sales tax. Send check or money order to: Show Ring Corporation of America, Suite 116, 1670 S. Amphlett Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94402.

## COMMENTS FROM ART BUYERS

"Dutch Warner print so real—unbelievable." Phyllis Gailiot, Butler, Pa.

"I am delighted with your print. Thanks for 7/1000." Tom Parkinson, Savoy, Ill.

"Dutch Warner & Horses print is suggestive of Rembrandt. There is an absolute majesty of the horses." Leonard Farley, Taunton, Mass.

"You overwhelm me. The print of Dutch and Horses is magnificent." Chappie Fox, V.P., Ringling Barnum.

"I'm just thrilled with the poster art of Clyde Beatty. Thanks for sharing your wonderful art with me." David J. Tetrault, Williamsburg, Va.

"It sure is Dutch Warner—there is no doubt about it!

am just thrilled." Frank Meeker, Troy, N.Y.

"The Dutch Warner print arrived amidst all of the heavy ash from St. Helens which erupted last eve. Your beautiful print was the only bright spot in our whole day! Advise of any additional in your draft horse series." Mrs. Margaret Overly, Tillamook, Or.

Former top circus 8-Horse Drivers—Charles (Haywire) Gable (Cole Bros. Circus), Frank Selock (Ringling Bros.), Pappy Miller (Al. G. Barnes)—all agreed "this art is the way it was—because he was there."

"Best of luck in your art. I am glad you decided to make them available. Clyde Beatty poster art arrived today." Don Covington, Coronado, Ca.

The horses are just great; the insert about "Dutch" and his "Wheelers" is very well done. I hope our grandson, when he looks at your art work, will appreciate the picture of the good old days." Your admiring friend Doc William Y. Higgins, DMV (formerly of R-B Circus).

"Print #1 arrived today. Am very pleased with it. Am looking forward to more on your series of draft horses. Will be interested in everything you have on that!" Gordon C. Hulbert, Fair Hope, Ala.

"Highlight of my day when your fine print of your art on 'Clyde Beatty—Steel Arena and Animals' arrived! I am interested in any of your Heavy Horse Art Series—please send 'Dutch Warner' prints." Mary Jane Lis, St. Paul, Minn.

"Very pleased. Thank you very much. My admiration and congratulations on your beautiful work." Eddy Peleman, Purris, Belgium.

"Very interested in your circus art." Don Stacey, Twickenham, England.

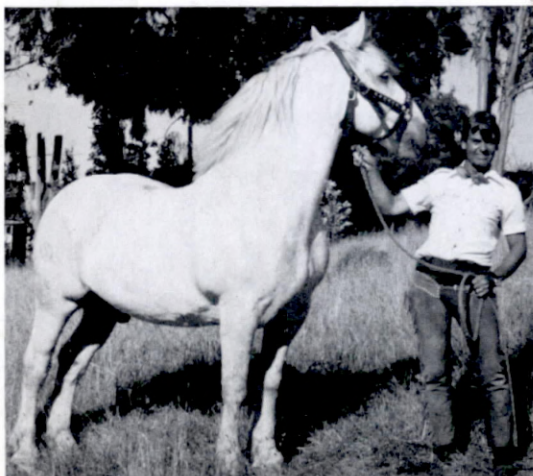
"I appreciate the beautiful Clyde Beatty—Steel Arena. Your art work is outstanding. I never saw better work!" Joe Bradbury, Atlanta, Ga.

"I was very pleased with your Clyde Beatty—Steel Arena. Please send me Beatty—Cisco Kid art." Dave Thornley, New Bedford, Mass.

"Please send Dutch Warner and Horses. A really nice print." Nancy Ressler, Waterville, Vt.

"Clyde Beatty and Animals—I can't believe the quality of it and the beauty when framed." Joseph Giordano, Coram, New York.

## THE DRAFT HORSE IS HIS LOVE



Booker's own faithful trouper is "Brigadoon." The inspiration to depict the draft horse in great detail by the artist is sparked by his daily conditioning, training and communications with this Gentle Giant.

"I have been associated with Draft Horses all my life—but this one is the finest I have ever seen. This fine gelding is of Shire, Clydesdale and important Percheron background—all from champion stock. Well broke at 9 years of age. Stands 18 hands and weighs in at 2000 lbs. His snappy, stylish action and way of going is a sight to behold. His versatility and unusual style have earned him his show champion awards.

